

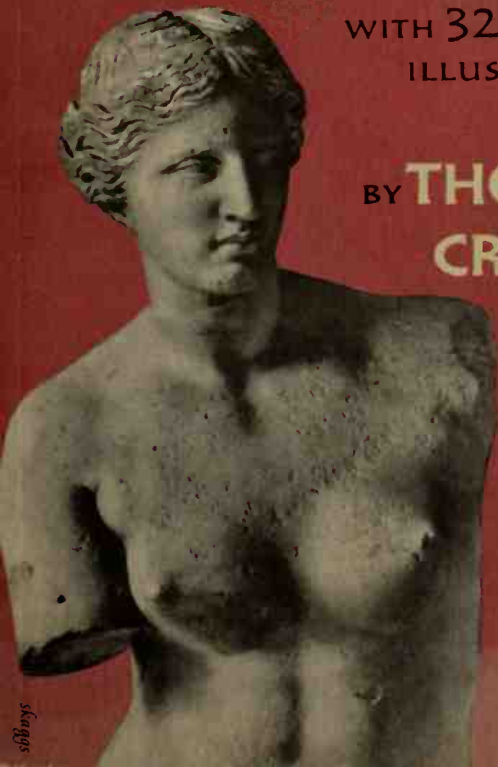


The Pocket Book of GREEK ART

WITH 32 GRAVURE
ILLUSTRATIONS

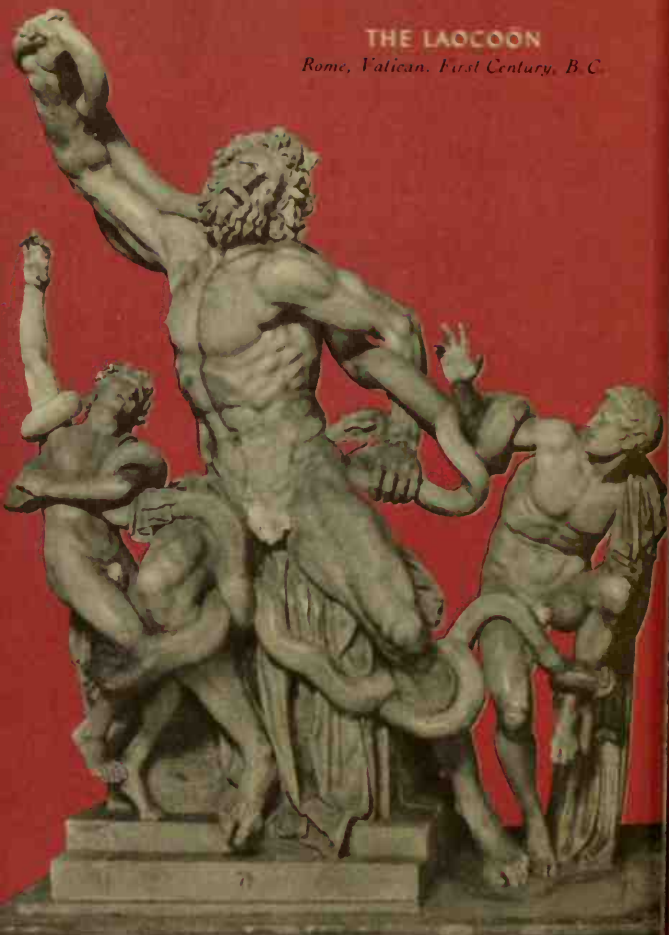
BY **THOMAS
CRAVEN**

Author of
MEN OF ART
MODERN ART
FAMOUS ARTISTS
AND
THEIR MODELS



THE LAOCOÖN

Rome, Vatican. First Century, B. C.



CG 100
THE POCKET BOOK OF

G R E E K
A R T

COVER ILLUSTRATIONS

Front: APHRODITE OF MELOS. Paris, Louvre.

Third Century B.C.?

Courtesy Braun and Cie, Paris—Erich S. Herrmann,
Inc., New York, General Agent

Back: THE PARTHENON, ATHENS

THE POCKET BOOK OF

G R E E K
A R T

THOMAS CRAVEN



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THE POCKET BOOK OF GREEK ART

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T.C.

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I. WHY THE GREEKS?

I have pondered the Greeks for a long time; I have given thought to them in faraway places with strange-sounding names such as Guayama and Minnesota, and in big cities, Los Angeles and Philadelphia, names which any ancient *hoplite* would have recognized as the coinage of his own country. And the Greeks have never ceased to fascinate me; for they remain, at once, the most glorious and the most baffling people the world has seen. I first met them in my childhood when my father, a lawyer in a western cow town, and a pioneer with a reverence for the classics and a knowledge of English poetry, bade me memorize the *Ode on a Grecian Urn*. Astride his knee while he puffed his long Key West stinkers, I repeated after him the magical poetry of Keats, the finest appreciation in any language of those golden, gifted Hellenes once inhabiting a flock of islands in the old Aegean Sea.

*When old age shall this generation waste,
Thou shalt remain, in midst of other woe*

*Than ours, a friend to man, to whom thou say'st:
 "Beauty is truth, truth beauty,"—that is all
 Ye know on earth, and all ye need to know.*

Later, in my teens, I acquired a tutor in the Attic and Ionic tongues. She was a Kentucky belle, young and fair, with a classic profile, and I worshiped the ground she walked on, made a drawing of her in the helmeted image of *Athena Parthenos*, and performed prodigious feats of memory in my passion to learn the lingo of the high gods.

Conditioned by the scholarship of the times, she fancied that the ancient Athenians had been uniformly tall, blond and comely, with honey-colored hair and snow-white teeth, a race of intellectual athletes, supersensitive to the arts, heroic in combat, and forever gadding about with no other business on earth than to create a statue or temple, or to invent some new science or philosophy. For all her wisdom, she was essentially an innocent, and I followed unquestioningly the purity of her teachings and soon was indoctrinated with notions of the Greeks that persisted for years. I still hold to many of them, for many of them were gospel. How otherwise account for the incredible glory the Greeks bequeathed us?

During my twenties, I became a teacher of Greek myself and, thus engaged, I promulgated

WHY THE GREEKS?

with gusto the classical doctrine derived from my fair Kentuckian. But eventually I began to sour on the Greeks, and for a time, to repudiate them and the entire ancient world.

I read the erudite mouthings of several British esthetes who almost persuaded me that no piece of Greek sculpture was worth looking at unless it had been carved before the sixth century B. C. I read Bernard Shaw, who scorned the "smashed pillars of the Acropolis"; and most convincing of all, H. G. Wells, who portrayed the classic Greeks as living in an atmosphere of political chicanery, barbaric personal abuses, music hall mummery, low-down conspiracy and complete disregard of the ideals ascribed to their sages or of the common decencies of a democratic government. It took me a few more years to recover from the effects of this medicine, and I began to think that the hemlock, the potation used by the law to put away subversive citizens, was the national beverage of that part of Greece north of the Corinthian Gulf.

In time, of course, I recovered, and I have returned to the Greeks—not in the ox-eyed credulity of my nonage, nor yet in the blasphemous disbeliefs of my middle years, but with just acknowledgment and mature appreciation of their matchless attainments. Much that has been urged against them and against the pedantic spirit of hero-worship that stultified our curricula for

generations is indubitably true. The disciplined harmonies and tempered perceptions of the Greeks were streaked with savage practices and unabashed depravity.

Their pagan religion, often childish in its hierarchy, was largely an art—an art with no special bearing on morality; and their morality was a code of philosophical postulates and state interventions. More often than not, they took their gods with a grain of salt, as they took their public figures; and their leaders held position by extraordinary services, as in the case of Pericles, or by criminal brilliance, as with Alcibiades. They had a low opinion of women and kept them within doors, usually in the kitchen. The only women allowed in public or in convivial discourse with men of parts were the *hetairae*, or kept ladies. Political conflicts were prolonged and ferocious, ending, as a rule, in the extermination of one faction by the other.

The Greeks loved to tear a man down, the more cruelly if he had rendered valiant public service—a malady also common to contemporary America. For character assassination, they resorted to a scheme of blackballing called ostracism, which carried a penalty of ten years' exile. They approved of suicide, perversions and infanticide, and championed a system of state education which removed children from the jurisdiction of parents. And though they were the founders of

WHY THE GREEKS?

democracy and boasted that every citizen had the right to participate in the general assembly, their democracy consisted of a handful of accredited representatives standing on the prostrate souls of multitudes of disfranchised slaves.

This would seem to be a terrible indictment of a defenseless people—and of a culture dead and gone so far as our purpose is concerned. But I have emphasized the iniquities of the Greeks in order to bring into sharpest relief their compensating virtues—their incomparable and undying achievements. It has been said that virtually the complete scaffolding of modern enlightenment was erected by the Greeks: our pedagogy, athletics, mathematics, sciences, poetry, philosophy and politics—but these are matters for other hands in other books. For me, the glory that was Greece does not reside in her philosophy and science, or even in her literature, and certainly not in her political history which was shameful and in many ways, fascist. The glory of Greece is to be found in her attainments in the fine arts.

Truly, these ancient citizens, slaves and artists were a wonderful people. Whatever they did, fair or foul, they never allowed their souls to be dried up by money-grubbing, and they allowed no one to waste his talents in wanton indolence or luxurious dissipation. They were the most sensitive, and at the same time, the most rational folk thus far to grace this planet: free from

melodrama, idiotic palaver, sentimentality, and cheapness in every shape and form; exempt from the pulings of minor poets and the snide distractions that pass for art, and eternally at war with ostentatiousness, claptrap and ugliness. From the kitchen to the temple, from the family hearth to the shrines of oracles, they seldom produced anything unworthy of their skill, except in the field of domestic architecture, and in pottery during the period of its decline.

During the last year, I have lived within the toss of a discus from the Metropolitan Museum in New York, and have made it a recreational habit to visit, twice a week, the superbly organized classical division of that institution. I can testify that in every department of living from the preparation of food to the preparation for war, from the adornment of a public square to the adornment of the human body, the Greeks so far surpassed the efforts of subsequent nations as to leave us conjecturing on the ludicrous insensibility of modern life. Not to mention their major glories in architecture and sculpture, their temples and their carven figures, let me point out that they also designed the most beautiful necklaces ever to adorn a woman's throat and the most attractive helmet ever to cover the cranium of the *hoplite*, or doughboy. Why the Greeks? The answer is simple. They remain the most artistic race in the history of mankind.

2. THE ISLES OF GREECE

*The isles of Greece, the isles of Greece!
Where burning Sappho loved and sung,
Where grew the arts of war and peace,
Where Delos rose, and Phoebus sprung!
Eternal summer gilds them yet,
But all, except their sun, is set.*

• • • •

*The mountains look on Marathon—
And Marathon looks on the sea;
And musing there an hour alone,
I dream'd that Greece might still be free;
For standing on the Persians' grave,
I could not deem myself a slave.*

BYRON

Lord Byron's songs about the Isles of Greece are as inspiring as the blue Ionian waters, but keep away from the mainland, if you wish to preserve your romantic visions; if you have dreamed of arcadian landscapes and cool sylvan

retreats where sculptors flourished and elusive nymphs were trapped by lusty satyrs, and the high gods descended to woo the mundane cuties. If you have grown up in New England where the public libraries in spotless towns are Corinthian temples; where the grass is green and the trees grow tall, you will find the physical setting of the Greeks bare and arid and hard to take. But if you hail from Kansas, or better still, from southern California, where the earth is dry and high, and the clear sunlight floods the rising sierras, and the vine is propagated in the wide valleys, you will understand the predominance of sculpture and the lofty citadels of the Athens of Pericles.

The mainland of Greece, an irregular, indented, mountainous country with Athens lying north of the Gulf of Corinth, and the Peloponnesus, the Spartan demesne, actually a peninsula, to the south, is only a man's palm on the face of the earth, a kingdom about the size of Scotland. Barren and precipitous, with no rivers anywhere, and bathed in crystalline light—that is the physical set-up of the Greeks. The soil is thin enough to roll up like a rug and take away; compared with the deep, black alluvium of the Mississippi Delta, it is hardly more than a film over the surface of marble upheavals. Agriculture on a large-scale, American, pattern is impossible; rye and barley, with unremitting effort, will make

THE ISLES OF GREECE

profitable crops, but it is a waste of muscle to attempt wheat and corn. The uplands and mountain slopes are favorable for the cultivation of the beautiful olive tree, the roots of which coil round the marble rocks like serpents, and for the grape which was sacred to Dionysus. Oxen, the beasts of burden in prehistoric times, constitute the organic power of today, and the lowly, rambunctious goat has continued through the ages as a source of milk and cheese.

There were other aspects of the terrain of the Hellenes that were challenging to the capacities of men—to artists and mariners—the foremost of which were the proximity of the sea, and the profusion of islands, to the west and east alike. With a hop, skip and a jump, a giant could leap into Italy on the one hand and into Asia Minor on the other. There were the islands of the blue Ionian Sea Shelley praised in verse, and those of the eastern archipelago where the Greeks, as Plato said, lived in and out of the water like frogs in a pond. The islands were made of marble and with the cool breezes blowing over them were unparalleled as natural sites for the worship of pagan deities and the building of treasuries for the housing of sacred relics. The mainland of Hellas, with Athens on one side of the Gulf of Corinth, and Sparta on the other, though dry and riverless, contained a number of imposing mountains not too high to climb and which, in the hey-

day of splendor, were the haunts of the immortals. Mount Olympus was the home of the gods; Hymettus was famous for its repositories of wild honey; Pelion, as everyone knows, was piled upon Ossa, and Pentelicus was composed of the finest marble in the world.

Deprived of agricultural resources, the Greeks turned to the sea, the wine-dark waves of Homer, for sustenance and adventure. Seafaring men accustomed to battling the elements and to intercourse with other peoples, the Greeks were open-minded and constantly receptive to new ideas. Indeed, the special genius of the Greeks lay in their proclivity to pick up a good thing wheresoever they found it, and in time, to remold it into something peculiarly their own. They gathered material from the freebooting Phoenicians; from the Assyrians and the Orientals; from the Pharaohs ruling the deltas of the Nile; and when they had assimilated and re-created their borrowings, the incomparable art of Greece began to bloom.

You may wonder, as I do frequently, why the Greeks of today produce no art worth mentioning. I wish I had the answer. If I knew, I could tell you why the Italians in the same environment as that of Leonardo da Vinci, and Michelangelo, have small concern with painting. The topographical configuration of Attica has not radically changed since the time of Pericles, when

THE ISLES OF GREECE

every third man, not a slave, was a sculptor or a sculptor's assistant. But today, Greece is barren of artists.

The Greeks are a paradoxical race. Not once in their highest glory did they extol the common man or admit the dignity of labor. They were not averse to toil, but they loved, best of all, to congregate in the *stoas* and *agoras*, and analyze the habits and frailties of mankind. You may see them at this writing in Athens, buzzing about, trading and vending, but little disposed to hoard money or forsake their independence, and ready, at the slightest provocation, to argue freedom by the Socratic formula. The tragedy of modern Greece is age-old and chronic: the absence of unity and the inability to coöperate in any consolidated enterprise. They love money but they love freedom more, and though they inhabit the classic lands of their ancestors, they bring forth no artists. Next to the Acropolis is a neon light proclaiming an American movie; and contemporary architecture is a blemish on the landscape; but there they are, garrulous and independent, as in the days of Phidias and Plato, and ready for some new wonder. It is time to look into their past.

3. FAR AWAY AND LONG AGO

The history of the rise and fall of the Greek civilization is long and complicated, and we can do no more in a little book of many pictures than trace its outlines and record outstanding developments as they relate to the growth and consummation of the arts. Generally speaking, the history of Greece, not only in its classical ascendancy but even to the present day, has been characterized by a conviction held by the minority—which is to say, by the favored few eligible to citizenship—that the rest of the world were barbarians. You were extremely unlucky, if you happened to be born an outsider, no matter how enlightened you may have been.

Another element in the checkered development of the Greeks was the utter want of unity. Not in any crisis, nor in any moment of peaceful respite, could the Greeks agree to coöperate, Athens with Sparta, or the islands with the mainland, thus to protect themselves against disinte-

gration. Every little community, and every pinpoint of a marble island must be a city-state, or a sovereignty in itself, ready to thumb its straight nose at the supremacy of Athens, and ready to yield allegiance to the hegemony only because it was better than to join the barbarians. This prideful, if not snobbish, spirit of disunity was born into the race.

As far back as 3000 B.C., the Greeks dropped their name into the melting pot of races. On the island of Cyprus, they hacked out little nude images in stone and tribal deities in copper, the prevalence of which gave the island its name; and in Crete they founded a civilization of luxurious culture from any standard, old or new. Even so, the Greeks were behind the Egyptians who had long been carving the gods they worshiped and building tombs in the form of pyramids. The ancient Pharaohs, as they looked out across "the lone and level sands," in the words of Shelley, and into the eternal majesty of the setting sun, strove to create in granite imperishable effigies of their gods. And they did—with a technical skill that is one of the miracles of art.

But the gods of the Egyptians, despite their majesty, were static and inhuman—powerful and august to kneel to, but as remote from the daily life of man as the conjunction of the planets. In contrast, the Greek deities were created in the image of man, and were human beings from first

to last in all their special attributes and jurisdictions. They were capable, in their sacerdotal prerogatives, of inserting a comic, mortal touch that brought them down to earth and made them credible, if not always supernatural. Fashioned in the spirit of the best of Greek art, they were human beings exalted by workings of art, by the vitality of a clean and controlled imagination.

My excuse for mentioning these primordial matters is that art is a very old activity, and in the morning twilight of history—and even before—attained a perfection unequaled in any other field of endeavor. In the island of Crete, for example, a gifted British archeologist exhumed a civilization of extraordinary advancement and refinement, a luxury-loving people inhabiting vast palaces with enormous master bedrooms, elaborate bathrooms, playrooms furnished with beautifully designed gambling tables and couches; expansive corridors, storage basements, and throughout, metal work and wall decorations of astounding modernity. The murals depicted stunning, big-eyed girls in low-neck gowns and tight bodices—all in a row watching a bull-fight—and the spectacle was a sight to behold. Slim-waisted matadors were stabbing at elongated, surging beasts while stem-waisted damsels stood by ready to serve cocktails to the killers. The old Cretans executed dazzling objects in copper and the precious metals, and except for the twentieth-century

Americans, gave more attention to bathrooms, concealed plumbing, and flush-toilets than has any other social organization.

Somewhat later, about 1500 B.C., another civilization flourished: the Mycenaean, with headquarters near Sparta and colonial outposts in the Troad of Asia Minor, where the Achaeans, for a woman's sake, "launched a thousand ships and burnt the topless towers of Ilium." You have read of Achilles, Agamemnon, Paris and Helen in the epic fathered on a blind minstrel named Homer. The existence of Troy and the deathless enterprises of the warring Greeks and Trojans—the distinction between the two has never been clearly defined—was regarded as semi-mythical until the latter part of the nineteenth century when an indefatigable German, Dr. Heinrich Schliemann, corroborated, in mass and detail, the fabulous hexameters of Homer.

A starving grocer boy with a divine belief in the old Greeks, Schliemann, by virtue of an intelligence and industry hard to believe in anyone not a demi-god, amassed a fortune and devoted his riches and his life to explorations of the ancient site of Troy on the Asiatic coast. He uncovered nine superimposed cities in the dust of Ilium, and though he erred in naming the right level as the stronghold of Priam, he succeeded in confirming unequivocally the historic truth of the Homeric story of the Greeks. Not that alone,

but he showed that the home of the wayfaring Achaeans was on the mainland of Greece, in Mycenae and Tiryns, and by digging and delving in those old ruins, he unearthed art deposits in the shape of temples, enclosing walls with sculptured gates, domestic abodes, and interior ornamentation of many kinds, including embossed work in gold of unsurpassed taste and skill. The fall of Troy occurred about 1100 B.C. and the poetic chronicler of the feud, nominally Homer, lived about 830 B.C.

The Cretans and the Mycenaeans with their far-famed allies, suffered the usual calamities. From the north the Achaeans descended on what is now the kingdom of Greece, intermarried with the existing residents, after conquering them, and in the course of biological events, brought forth the first indivisible Greeks, the founders of the master race, the progenitors of the blond, athletic supermen whom my Kentucky tutor taught me to idolize. But afterwards, no man knows precisely when, a wave of hard-bitten marauders came down from Illyria, and these cutthroats exterminated the elegant Cretans, or drove them, along with the other occupants of the mainland, into scattered retreats, far and wide. Some of the Greeks fled to the islands of the Aegean, and to the shores of Asia Minor, where they nursed their cultural heritage and, in time, returned to Greece proper to become the originators of Greek art, as

it is now denominated. The ancestry of the sculptured masterpieces of the fifth and fourth centuries B.C., and of temples such as the Parthenon, may be traced as far back as 1100 B.C.

I must explain the statement that the classic Greeks traced their artistic lineage back to the luxury-loving Cretans and the two-fisted Achaeans. The line of descent was neither straight nor continuous. The great age of Greek art, the age of the temples of Aegina, Olympia and the Parthenon, came centuries after Homer smote his bloomin' lyre, and many more centuries after the Cretans and Mycenaeans built their gorgeous palaces and houses of worship.

All this was long ago and complicated. The point to remember is that in the territory of ancient Greece, several distinct peoples with different ideals and cultures began to mingle and interbreed, and colonize together in distant places—and often to make war on one another. Out of this emerged an element that added to the glory of mankind, and that was the Greek genius. Man for man, carving for carving, and temple for temple, there was more art in the soul of the average Greek than has ever been centered in the soul of the average good citizen of any commonwealth anywhere, at any subsequent time. And having said this, we enter the era of recorded history.

CHRONOLOGICAL TABLE

B.C.	
3000-2600.	Early Minoan civilization.
2100-1950.	First Cretan palaces.
1580.	Founding of Athens by Cecrops.
1400-1200.	Late Minoan culture. Palaces of Tiryns and Mycenae.
1300-1100.	Achaean domination of Greece.
1250.	Theseus at Athens; Oedipus at Thebes; Minos at Cnossus.
1250-1183.	Age of Homeric heroes.
1183.	Fall of Troy.
1104.	Dorian invasion of Greece.
1100- 850.	Ionian migration.
1000.	Temple of Hera at Olympia.
840.	Probable time of Homer.
776.	First Olympic games.
750- 594.	Age of aristocracies.
700.	Beginnings of stone architecture.
680.	State coinage in Greece.
630.	Laws of Lycurgus at Sparta.
620.	Laws of Draco at Athens.
600.	The poets Sappho and Alcaeus.
594.	Laws of Solon at Athens.
590.	Temple of Artemis at Athens.
582.	Acropolis statues.
580- 550.	Statues of the <i>Apollo</i> type.
576.	First Nemean games.

CHRONOLOGICAL TABLE

- 561. Dictatorship of Peisistratus.
- 560. First Panathenaic games.
- 550. *Hera of Samos*, sculpture.
- 529. Pythagoras, philosopher.
- 510- 500. Pediments of temple of Apollo at Athens.
- 500- 480. Pediments of temple of Aphaia at Aegina.
- 499. Ionian revolts.
- 492. Themistocles, archon at Athens.
- 482. Aristides ostracized.
- 480. Battles of Thermopylae, Salamis.
- 480- 470. *Ludovisi Throne*, sculptures.
- 478. Pindar, poet.
- 477. Delian League.
- 477. *Charioteer of Delphi*, sculpture.
- 465- 457. Sculptures of the temple of Zeus at Olympia.
- 463- 431. Public career of Pericles.
- 460. *Stele of Girl with Pigeons*.
- 456. Paeonius. Sculptor of the *Victory*; may have constructed eastern pediment of temple of Zeus.
- 456. Alcámenes. Sculptor of western pediment of temple of Zeus.
- 450. Myron. Sculptor of *Discus Thrower*, *Athena and Marsyas*.
- 450. Polycletus. Sculptor of *Doryphorus*, *Diadoumenos* and *Amazons*.
- 447- 431. Parthenon built. Director-general was Phidias.
- 442- 438. Frieze of Parthenon.
- 442- 438. *Athena Parthenos*, statue by Phidias.
- 438- 432. Pediments of Parthenon carved.
- 437. The *Prophylaea*, architectural entrance to Acropolis.

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- 432. Trials of Phidias and Aspasia.
- 431- 404. Peloponnesian War.
- 431- 424. *Medea*, drama by Euripides; *Electra*, drama by Sophocles.
- 430. *Olympian Zeus*. Colossal statue by Phidias.
- 429. Death of Pericles.
- 423. *The Clouds*. Drama by Aristophanes.
- 420. The Erechtheum. Temple of Athena on the Acropolis.
- 421- 404. *Caryatids* of the Erechtheum.
- 413. Athenian defeat at Syracuse.
- 410. Alcibiades in power.
- 410. Retreat of Xenophon's Ten Thousand.
- 399. Trial and death of Socrates.
- 393. Plato's *Apology*, a defense of Socrates.
- 377- 354. Second Athenian Empire.
- 395- 350. Scopas. Sculptor of *Apollo*, *Heracles*, and other deities. Worked on the great tomb, or Mausoleum, at Halicarnassus.
- 375- 300? Lysippus. Sculptor of portraits of Aesop, Socrates and Alexander. Carved *Apoxyomenus*.
- 360. Praxiteles. Sculptor of *Hermes* and *Aphrodite of Cnidus*. Worked on the Mausoleum.
- 357- 346. War between Athens and Macedonia.
- 356. Birth of Alexander the Great.
- 353- 349. The Mausoleum at Halicarnassus.
- 351. First fulmination of Demosthenes.
- 350. *Demeter of Cnidus*, statue.
- 342. Aristotle tutors Alexander the Great.
- 336. Assassination of Philip and accession of Alexander.
- 330. Apelles, painter.

CHRONOLOGICAL TABLE

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| 329- | 325. | Alexander invades Asia. |
| | 323. | Death of Alexander. |
| | 322. | Deaths of Aristotle, Demosthenes, and
Diogenes. |
| | 321. | Partition of Alexander's empire. |
| | 300? | <i>Winged Victory of Samothrace.</i> |
| | 290. | Rhodian school of sculpture. |
| | 280. | <i>Demosthenes.</i> Statue by Polyeuktos. |
| | 278. | <i>The Colossus of Rhodes.</i> Statue of
the Sun God, 105 feet in height. |
| | 240? | <i>The Dying Gaul.</i> Statue. |
| 197- | 160. | School of sculpture at Pergamon un-
der Eumenes II. |
| | 180. | Great sculptured altar at Pergamon. |
| | 86. | <i>Borghese Warrior.</i> Sculpture by
Agasias. |
| 100- | 30. | <i>Farnese Bull.</i> Group statues. |
| | 50. | <i>Laocoön.</i> Group statues. |
| | 50. | <i>The Prize Fighter.</i> Bronze statue. |

4. THE GODS ARE DEAD

In one of his earlier books, H. L. Mencken, always considerate of the religious propensities of the human race, propounded a query. The pagan gods were dead, he asseverated, and was there anywhere a single mourner who watered their graves? And in all the wide world was there one man who believed in Jupiter or worshiped at his antique altar?

A sad and even tragic interrogation; for time was when Jupiter was at the peak of the heap and the gods of Greece dominated a large area of the ancient world. They are gone now, gone for good, and all that is left of them is the art created to woo them and their suffrage. It is not an exaggeration to say that 90% of all Greek art was created in the name of the immortal gods, who, alas! turned out not to be immortal except as they became the instrumentalities of artists.

In the pale beginnings, Greek art, in common with that of all primitive societies, was the servant of superstition and oracular magic—and re-

ligion was a safeguard against elemental vengeance. Crude limestone, pared down here and there to suggest certain gods, and incised slabs, or *stelae*, were executed to protect men and women and to speed them on their journey to the drab reaches of the departed dead. *Ex voto* offerings in the shape of statuettes were placed in tombs: crude effigies of cooks baking bread; women weaving cloth or grinding corn; laundresses at their wash; and other carvings associated with fecundity—such relics are the first evidences of Greek art, together with certain reliefs and magical contrivances put forth in the hope of subduing hostile competitors for the usufructs of the sparse classical earth. Like all primitive art, the first art of Greece was in the form of idols.

The Greeks, with their mental agility and their independence of spirit, however liberally they may have borrowed from the Pharaohs and the Assyrians, evolved their own hagiology of gods and goddesses, and left us celestial categories that have been pillaged unblushingly in song and fable. I was weaned on this mythology, but after my majority in faraway places with strange-sounding names, I began to look upon Jupiter and his crew with less reverence, and to discover for myself how shrewd the Greeks had been. They endowed their gods with human, and often unedifying, traits, and they were never quite sure

that their notion of pagan immortality was an unmixed blessing.

Never did they arrive at the exalted conception of God inherent in the Christian religion, one that still attracts people to our churches, Catholic and Protestant alike. Monotheism did not tempt them; they had to have a hotel register of gods, one for every human vagary, and all of them more sculpturesque than sacrificial. They created their deities in the image of man, with all the nobility and weakness of man—anthropomorphic was the polysyllable given me by my tutor—and while it is difficult, if not impossible today, to admire Jupiter, it is not hard to respect the thoroughgoing humanity that elevated him to the presidency of the coterie.

As the Greeks spawned and multiplied and gave rein to their civilized talents, religion became the handmaiden of art. In their temples and in all their architecture with its accompaniment, sculpture, the basic idea, or motivating precept, was the commemoration or propitiation of some one god or another. The domestic architecture of the Greeks was nondescript, if not disgraceful. They made works of art out of every public edifice, and out of every culinary utensil, but their homes, where they secreted their women, were not half so comfortable as the stables now built by American farmers. They held women in low esteem, and cared little, or nothing, for home life,

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preferring to live in the streets and to argue in some cool corner over the nature of art. Was it one and indivisible, or was it compounded of many elements, each of which, being of equal value, canceled another?

As we observe the organic growth of their temples and statues, we are unceasingly aware of the fact that their art was neither a luxury nor a collection of objects secreted in a museum. To the man and the maid of Athens, all things useful were potentially beautiful: the pots and pans in the kitchen, the candlesticks, the perfume bottles in the boudoir, the armor of the soldier, and the votive statues of the gods in the temples. There was no special brand of art for the ruling class and another for the slaves and goatherds. There was simply art—higher, perhaps, when propitiatory to the gods, but in the adaptation of figures, shapes and forms to specific needs and purposes, it was always on the same serene level, and, in its origin, always connected with religion. Even the common objects of daily utility, the kitchenware as well as the vases, were decorated with scenes illustrating the life of deities whom they worshiped.

Though fashioned in the image of man, the classic gods were more exquisitely proportioned—the most subtle idealizations of the human figure ever carved or painted. They became one with mortals in their mundane desires and physi-

cal pastimes. In establishing the number and functions of their heavenly rulers, the Greeks took care never to surrender their independence, and remained suspicious and argumentative to the end; and at no period came under the dominion of a priestly caste, as did the Egyptians. In truth they kept the priests and religious surrogates at the minimum and treated them as altar boys or official attendants in oracular seances and sacrifices.

I do not wish to imply that they were wantonly irreligious, or that they rounded up a stable of specious deities solely to curb the libidinous instincts of slaves and *peltasts*. I merely want to underline the fact that with their unimpeachable rationalism, they gradually shaped their gods into idealized entities, so far as their artistic embodiment was concerned, and into very earthly creatures when it came to normal passions. We shall see, as their art is unfolded, how the gods were always tutelary, sacred to certain cities, and of variable powers geographically. As an illustration, I need go no farther afield than Athens, named for *Athena Parthenos*, the virgin, a curious piece of irony, with innumerable works of art in her honor from temples to tablespoons.

When a citizen of Athens died of natural causes, he was conventionally prayed over, and speeded into the most colorless hereafter imaginable. The Greeks did not crush their bacchana-

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lian impulsions in order to lay up treasures in heaven. They brought their gods down into their daily existence, exalted them in their temples, humanized them on their kitchenware, and before their art had been vitiated, portrayed their female deities in a nakedness that was superbly chaste and lovely. The most real and engaging of all their gods was not Zeus, or Athena or Aphrodite, but Kore, the goddess of flowers and harvests, and that slant-eyed, singing, piping god of the flocks, the one and only Pan. When Socrates invoked the powers above, he addressed himself not to Zeus, the kingpin, but to:

"Beloved Pan, and all ye gods who haunt this place! Grant me beauty of the inward soul and may the inward and outward man be at one. May I reckon the wise to be wealthy, and may I have as much gold as only the wealthy can carry."

Inasmuch as the Greeks produced their art round a religious core, it will be helpful to call the roll of their major deities and indicate their special protective offices.

APHRODITE. Goddess of beauty and love. Also associated with cults of lust and fertility. First of the female deities to be represented in the nude.

APOLLO. God of music, youth, athletics and hunting. Guardian of flocks and divine instrument of purification. Also lord of oracles. Hand-

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somest figure in the hierarchy and usually depicted as a refined athlete.

ARES. God of war. Represented with helmet, lance and shield.

ARTEMIS. Virgin huntress, protectress of maidenhood, and goddess of marriage. Portrayed as strong young woman in short tunic and high boots.

ATHENA. Goddess of wisdom and of the arts of peace and war. One of the major deities of Olympus and patroness of the Parthenon.

DEMETER AND PERSEPHONE. Mother and daughter. Goddesses of the growing earth and harvest.

DIONYSUS. God of wine and the drama which was developed from special ceremonials in his honor. Also worshiped as lord of fertility and the seasons, and of animal and vegetable life.

EROS. Son of Aphrodite and god of love. Represented as a youth in earlier periods, later as a child.

HECATE. Goddess of night.

HELIOS. The sun god.

HEPHAESTUS. Sacred to mechanics. Represented as a cripple, with hammer and anvil.

HERA. Wife of Zeus, queen of Olympus, and protectress of marriage and childbirth.

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HERMES. Messenger of the gods. Also associated with the rites of fertility and the god of commerce and prize fights.

HESTIA. Goddess of the home and hearth.

HYGIEIA. Goddess of health.

IRIS. Female messenger of the gods.

NEMESIS. Originally associated with Artemis as a woodland deity; later the goddess of divine justice and symbol of fate.

NIKE. Winged goddess of victory.

PAN. A minor deity but very popular. Lord of Arcadia. An earthy figure, protector of flocks, and usually depicted with hoofs and horns.

PLUTO. Ruler of the underworld.

POSEIDON. God of the sea, of rivers and of springs. Tamer of wild horses. Represented with a trident in his hand, or riding the waves in a chariot.

SATYRS. Hybrid creatures, half-horse and half-human. Symbols of lust and earthiness.

SILENUS. Handyman of Dionysus. Depicted as coarse-featured old drunkard.

ZEUS. Chief of the gods, and hurler of thunderbolts. Father and ruler of the Olympian crew. Represented with flowing hair and beard.

5. GRAVEN IMAGES

In the modern world of Bing Crosby and Joe DiMaggio, of television, the comic strip and the automobile, the art of sculpture is a dead duck. No one needs it or uses it, and such intrepid souls as pursue modeling and carving and casting are the most hapless of God's children. But with the old Greeks, it was, if not the primary business of living, then one of their deathless glories, perhaps their strongest claim to preëminence. Associated with sculpture were many subordinate arts: the working of metals, the making of jewelry and pottery and the fashioning of articles of daily use, such as pots and pans, and the accouterments of targeteers; all of which, as previously pointed out, were incomparably beautiful in the wedding of design to practicability.

But let us make no mistake about the Greeks. They cared far more for their statues and reliefs than for the men who designed and executed them. They set no great store by originality in the modern sense, and were content to improve on past examples, refining them by incessant delica-

cies and modifications which carried their sculptures to absolute perfection. The artist, having work to do and honorably employed as an up-standing member of society, had no need to affect the eccentricities of his profession, the freakish insignia displayed by the artist of today lest he be otherwise classified as a plumber. In short, sculpture to the Greeks was as organic a part of daily living as eating and drinking, or disputing in public, or roasting collops on the altars of Zeus.

The Greeks had mastered the art of working precious metals as early as 2000 B.C., and the casting of figures in bronze was of dateless antiquity. That they were consummate workmen, anyone would know who has seen their necklaces, earrings, goblets, armor and table services, or their statues in bronze. By far the greater number of their major achievements in sculpture were cast in bronze, but only a handful of these are in existence, for the simple, military reason that the barbarians, in overrunning Greece, melted down the bronze statues and molded them into deadly weapons. The Greeks also loved clay and terra cotta and from the earliest days when they buried crude, earthen *ex votos* with their dead to the time of the Tanagra statuettes, produced a steady supply of small figures in bright, red, fired clay, with ornamental touches of paint here and there.

Another medium employed by the Greeks has remained almost synonymous with their art—the

pure, lucent, metamorphosed limestone known to all the world as marble. The mountains of the mainland, conspicuously Pentelicus and Hymettus, and many of the islands, such as Paros, were composed of marble, and the marbles ranged in texture from milky white, interpenetrated with radiant crystals, to warm, toned surfaces faintly washed with golden oxides. From the propitious moment when they first scratched in this medium, in the seventh century, B.C., to the apogee of Greek carving, no more than two hundred years elapsed. There was, I must explain, a long, preliminary period of trial and error, during which the Greeks, like all peoples, had patiently to learn how to build up a lifelike figure, and how to endow this figure with vitality and surpassingly human attributes.

In bringing the art of sculpture to perfection in two centuries, the Greeks did not begin without precedents. They inherited the luxurious civilization of blurred antiquity in Crete and Mycenae and Troy, where the wooden horse contained a thousand armed Hellenic jockeys in its belly. This pre-Homeric culture was extirpated, as I have said, first by the Achaeans and later by the Dorians—and the post-Homeric Greeks had to begin all over again, with a few inimitable examples to guide them. The main source of counsel came from the Ionians, who fled from the western islands to the shoreline of Asia. The Ionians were

daring, resourceful folk, liberal freebooters and art traders who had dealings with the Orientals, the Egyptians and other hard-bitten galley slaves in the Mediterranean. They imported from the Nile the secrets of sculpture, and struggled to free themselves from the granitic rules imposed on carving by the Pharaohs and worshipers of hybrids.

You might wonder, if you have had no experience with the difficulties involved in making a piece of sculpture, or with the slow development of the technique involved, why it took the Greeks two centuries to achieve perfection in marble. For artists and historians, two centuries is only a moment of recorded time; and in isolated localities such as the Gold Coast of Africa and the coastline occupied by the North Pacific Indians, where sculpture has been practiced for hundreds of years, the results in wood and metal are crude and almost infantile in comparison with those of the Greeks.

It might be put this way. Suppose, in America today, sculpture were nonexistent; that we had no carving or painting, no tradition to draw upon, and no examples of statuary in our museums. And suppose that you, an adult, attempted to hack a figure out of a block of marble. What would it look like? The Lord only knows! But most probably, it would resemble something done in the nursery, or one of those abortions admired by

certain modernists. In the arts of painting and sculpture, the student does not rely on nature alone. He depends, like students of architecture, music and the other arts, on classic models for instruction, and without them, would be practically helpless.

As an illustration of the authority of tradition, I may cite the law of frontality which the Egyptians imposed upon sculpture. This law, in operation for a millennium or two, meant that the statues of Egypt, however powerful and marvelous in their workmanship, were rigid and inert. They always confront you, gaze straight ahead, look you straight in the eye. If you should cut one in half by bisecting the head, neck and torso, the two parts would be identical. In seated figures, the head, neck, and chest are always in the same plane—never turned or bent, never out of line. Standing figures are invariably flat-footed, with the left foot advanced, and in no case does the weight of the body rest on one foot, with the other raised or relaxed.

For a long time, the Greeks obeyed the law of frontality, producing a succession of static, standing figures, known as *Kouroi*, or youths, sometimes as *Apollo*s, and obviously influenced by the Egyptians. The men living by the Nile had carved great and imposing figures out of stone as hard as iron, and it took nerve to disagree with them and break their rules. Eventually, the Greeks did

question their practices and in the course of time violated all the laws hitherto held sacred by sculptors. The Greeks loved new things, but they were rationalists and accepted changes only after they had tested them and proved them by experience.

Towards the end of the seventh century B.C., after confining their efforts to wood and bronze, the Greeks began to carve in marble, which was as abundant as the hills of cement-producing shale in America. The very first figures resembled trunks of trees with incised lines or shallow flutings to suggest drapery, and the head popping out of the top; but as time went on the nude *kouros* began to appear, straight and immobile, and a female type draped snugly in a long *peplos*. The male youths, or *Apollos*, followed a slowly changing pattern for almost a century. The long arms hung down close to the slim-waisted body; the left foot was advanced in Egyptian style, and the face wore a curious smile—the archaic smile which captivated Leonardo da Vinci. The first women were in the shape of marble columns, all of a piece and motionless, the legs pressed together, and the *peplos* arranged in furrows, often exquisitely designed and hewn.

The artists of Hellas, while not given to startling innovation and eccentricities, were not slaves to convention. They began to study the human body closely and to observe its move-

ments from protracted observation. They had unusual advantages for observing the nude, and from the beginning presented the male figure undraped. From the gymnasium, from light-armed soldiers in the summer, and above all, from athletes in the Olympic games which were first contested in 776 B.C., sculptors studied the figure in action: the play of muscles in obedience to directed movements, the position of the bones beneath the flesh, and the rhythm of the body when it was beautifully poised for throwing the discus. From the seventh century to the close of the fifth, the Greeks evolved the art of sculpture from the inert forms borrowed from Egypt to the most subtly animated and flawlessly proportioned figures in history. It is difficult to define the miracles they performed: they endowed marble with the effects of living tissue, living tissue that has been transformed into figures of indescribable serenity and nobility. They created early forms of extreme simplicity: majestic giants, *Apollo* and *Zeus*, at the Temple of Olympia, and the carvings on the frieze and detached figures in the pediments of the Parthenon at Athens.

To gain this mastery over marble, they worked with eyes and minds and hands for generations, always designing statues for public use, not for museums and connoisseurs. They learned to render the male nude in all sorts of postures—in the act of running, leaping and fighting; but they

avoided violence, excessive strains and over-muscled figures. Always they were restrained and action was made potential by a scheme of balancing and counterbalancing muscular articulations. They studied anatomy, not in the morgue or the clinic, but out of doors when trained athletes, completely nude, competed for the laurel. Imagine today, a track meet between colleges, with all the participants naked, and hundreds of sculptors on hand to observe and take notes. In Sparta, the girls also competed in the nude, but the Greek sculptors had no use for athletic women, and seldom used them as models. Even the Amazons, those mythical, fighting females, were depicted as noble and feminine, a little large, perhaps, but not muscle-bound.

From the mastery of movement and anatomy, the Athenian artists proceeded to ideal forms and faces—to the creation of figures, male and female, beyond those produced by nature. From the incised tree trunks and static, smiling *Apollos*, they traveled the road leading to their great masterpieces—to marbles which reveal living flesh within the polished surfaces, faces of god-like serenity, women in costumes of infinite grace, and ultimately, women in the nude. While on the road to their divine forms in marble, they were building treasures and temples for their gods and goddesses. Let us see what they achieved in architecture, the mother of the arts.

6. THE TEMPLE

In many departments of architecture, the Greeks could hardly be called master builders. They were inclined, as I have tried to make clear without undue emphasis on their less admirable traits, to avoid mechanical intricacies and the problems of engineering which today constitute the major elements of architecture. They were artists, first and last, with no respect whatever for what they termed the humdrum, soul-killing monotony of manual labor, and with nothing but contempt for the sweat-inducing, physical strain exacted of them by heroic sculpture, and architecture in particular. Once they tackled a complication, however, they became the most thoroughgoing artists the world has yet begotten—and the complication in this chapter is that of putting blocks of marble together.

In general appearance, Athens must have been no more than an ordinary city, something like a seaport of modern Venezuela. The shops were stuccoed boxes devoid of ornament, and the pri-

vate houses were similar in structure—flat-roofed jobs redeemed by a patio but less eye-filling than the pastel-tinted garages of Miami Beach. The Greeks could have done much better in their commercial and domestic building, if they had addressed their best creative energies to the problem. But they refused to get excited over houses in which adding and subtracting and cheating were practiced—they approved of cheating if the victims happened to be barbarians—and they were under no moral or spiritual compulsion to erect beautiful dwellings for women and children, the first of whom should be kept in the kitchen, the second brought up in public stables to serve the state. They were far from exemplary human beings in many ways.

In the rapid course of events, in fact, concurrently with their nationalistic struggles, the Greeks were obliged to face the problems of building—not the ordinary building of shops and barns and homes and marmalade factories—but the designing of shrines fit for the immortal gods; and did they crack open the problem? Take a look at the residuary effects of their temples throughout the wide, wide world.

From their first attempts at erecting shrines for local deities and appropriate shelters for the gods who had blessed them, the Greeks proceeded with certain precise and undeviating principles in mind. They were familiar with arches

and vaults, with domes and minarets, but they asked themselves the simple question, "Why go to all this trouble to bring forth something incomparably beautiful?" In answer, they rejected the arch and the dome, which the Romans were to use so grandiloquently, and concentrated on the simplest, the most primitive and the most practical blueprint for building that man has followed since he came out of the caves into the sunlight.

If a child contrives a hutch for his pet rabbit, or a Tennessee hillbilly makes a nuptial cabin for his twelve-year-old daughter, what is the nature of the architecture? Four walls and a gable roof with a slight pitch—no more, no less. The Greeks were just as elemental in their basic designs, but when they perfected their temples on such simple specifications, they achieved a style which, to this day, preserves the name of classic. And, as it has turned out, they also achieved a perfection that has influenced, discouraged, and ruined architects for almost two thousand years. They confined their architectural genius to the temple, and the temple has remained the one universal form in the history of building. It is, indeed, so flawless and unalterable as to hold the art of building in bondage, and to fill modern architects with rage against its very existence.

Every literate soul is familiar with the Greek temple, the synonym of indefectible building. The

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generous, classic-minded citizenry of Nashville, Tennessee, have erected a full-scale replica of the Parthenon, and it is a work of wonder and of joy—the only reconstruction of its kind in any land. The Romans, striving to be Greeks, just as modern artists strive to be French, added to the temple, embellishing it meretriciously with domes and fancy columns; the French, under the dominion of Louis XIV, the Sun King, installed pseudo-classic buildings at every street corner in Paris and throughout Versailles, and thus led the world to believe that they had inherited the secrets of ancient architecture.

Every street in gloomy, soot-besmirched London contains its derivations of the Greek temple, and in the United States, from the foundation of our colonies to the latest government building in our capital, it is the pediment and the column that have predominated. The city of Washington, under the influence of Jefferson, himself a professional architect of classical persuasion, was designed by a French practitioner with Greek ideals; the domed capitol is a Roman development on the Grecian base; the University of Virginia is a monument to Jefferson's genius, and his home at Monticello is the fountainhead of thousands of private mansions below the Mason and Dixon line. And in the North and West and Southwest, the public libraries, courthouses and State capitols, as well as the old luxurious pri-

vate houses, are likely to be descendants of the one and only Greek temple.

Needless to say, there must be good reasons for the triumph of the temple, and I need not enumerate all of them. Perfection may become tiresome, but it never grows old-fashioned; and in the long history of man's efforts at building, from the tepee and igloo to the chateau and skyscraper, nothing can stand with the classic temple in continuously satisfying unification and harmonious proportioning. Contemporary architects, justly tired of the persistence of sham classicism, affect to despise the *simon-pure* article originated by the Athenians, but they have not yet succeeded in adding to the three orders associated with classic building. It might even be argued that today, with steel and reinforced concrete, cantilevering and prefabrication, artistic building has gone with the wind, and that the best that can be done is to shoot a vertical shaft to the stars and punch it full of holes for light. And now, with air-conditioning and fluorescent illumination, the windows, too, are eliminated, leaving sheer naked walls as barren of ornament as the adobe pueblos of the southwestern Indians. I agree that to imitate the Greek temple in an industrial world is an absurdity—but it is also a confession of impotence.

In the fifth century B.C., the whole world that was Greek, was building temples: at home, on the

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mainland north and south of the gulf; on the marble-topped islands dotting the frog-pond between Hellas and the Troad; on the coastline of Asia Minor, and to the west in the Ionian islands and among the colonists on the Italian shores. In the county of Attica, shrines appeared at Delphi and Eleusis; and in Athens, the mother of art, the Acropolis was beginning to stand out against the sharp skyline. After the hordes of Xerxes, in the Persian wars, had razed the city, the free citizens, under the leadership of Pericles, voted to rebuild the Acropolis—the word means the highest city—in a form and majesty worthy of the Greek genius and as a collective *ex voto* to the gods in whom they trafficked. They concentrated on the temple and went to work.

In form the temple is a rectangle, with a low-pitched, gable roof resting on side walls, and with columns to support a front porch—and sometimes a back porch—and a colonnade running down the sides. In its early stages, it was a limestone affair, with two, or four, wooden columns at the front to bear the weight of an extended roof. In its final development, it became a rectangular marble structure with an encircling double row of columns, a portico at front and back, and a wide colonnade on either side. The essential simplicity of the first examples was never violated, but the final product was composed entirely of marble, even to the translucent tiles

on the roof—and with sculptured embellishments in the pediments and in the frieze running around the top of the walls under the colonnade.

The temple was not designed to admit a congregation of devotees, but solely to exalt a special deity. In the front chamber, or *cella*, a cult statue, usually of monumental size, was placed, and in the back room the treasures sacred to the god or goddess in question, were assembled. The actual rites of worship—the knee-bending and collop cooking of the sacrifices—were performed outside to safeguard the immaculate interior from the contaminations of kitchen grease and body odors. In the evolution of the temple, three orders emerged, the nominal distinctions springing from the differentiations in the size, height and capitals of the columns employed. This may, at first glance, appear to be an extremely elementary, if not insignificant measurement of styles, but the deviations between the three orders, the Doric, Ionic and Corinthian, were carried from the structure of the column into every nook and cranny and proportion of the edifice.

The orders of Greek architecture are universally known. There is the Doric column with the simple, expanding cushion for the capital; the Ionic, with the double scroll, or volutes, at the top; and the Corinthian, distinguished by its sprouting of chicory leaves at the upper end of the shaft. Oddly enough, the master minds of

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architecture have never added a fourth order, since the flowering of the temple more than 2000 years ago. Perhaps it is just as well, since the needs of modern man are for adequate housing for veterans and slum-dwellers and not for lovely temples.

Let us peer a little more intimately into Greek building—into the structure of the Parthenon, which, from floor to gable and from end to end, remains the closest thing to absolute perfection that art and handicraft have produced. The old Parthenon had been a crude limestone house of worship, but after it was demolished by the Persians, together with the rest of the Acropolis, the Athenians, in a truly inimitable outburst of civic pride, decreed to rebuild it on a scale commensurate with their talents and their patriotism. The director general of the rehabilitation program was Phidias, who, according to the best of evidence, was the greatest of all architects, sculptors and city-planners. How much he had to do with the building of the Parthenon is a matter of conjecture.

The body politic of Athens, in the administration of Pericles, voted more money for the propagation of art than any modern state has ventured, proportionately, to match. If it is possible to translate ancient money into present day equivalents, then we may compute the cost of the Parthenon at \$4,500,000; the cost of the gold-

and-ivory *Athena* in the front chamber at \$6,000,000; and in fifteen years the aggregate cost of the restorations amounted to \$58,000,000 which in modern America would mean that at least 90% of the national income would be earmarked for works of art. This is only another indication of the esthetic propensities of the old Greeks.

Leading up a wind-swept hillock were flights of marble stairs flanked with statues on pedestals, and at the summit of the rocky eminence were peerless temples and rest rooms. The Greeks were not particularly distinguished in the allocation of their buildings or in the placement of their statuary, but to the construction of the Parthenon, they devoted the fullness of all their resources, mental and material. It has always seemed a little ironical to me that they should have dedicated their highest powers to the Virgin goddess, when, in actual life, they were worldly and not above corruption, and virginal only in the purity of their art.

For twenty years, Phidias, the director, had his slaves quarry the sides of Mt. Pentelicus for the finest marble, and with an ample stockpile at hand, laid the foundation of the Virgin's temple. The building was made entirely of marble, pure white marble slightly toned down by iron oxides to destroy the gravestone bleakness; the walls were surrounded by two rows of Doric columns,

and the roof—imagine the glory of it!—was hand-carved marble tiles. No mortar was used in the joints of the building. All the blocks in the walls were hewn and polished to fit with adjacent pieces, and the great columns were composed of separate drums, or segments, all brought into vertical oneness without mortar—huge blocks, rounded, fluted, polished and doweled together with the precision that is one of the components of perfection.

The Doric masterpiece was 228 feet in length, 101 feet wide, 65 feet high, and proportioned inside and out, from floor to roof, with mathematical allowances for optical illusions. The height of the columns was five times their diameter to insure proper slenderness—in the old, somewhat heavy Doric columns, the height was four times the central thickness—and in every measurement of the building, the combined effect of harmony was taken into account. The floor, for example, was slightly rounded in the center to give the effect of a level surface when viewed from a short distance; the columns bulged a little in the middle drums, and were tilted delicately towards the interior; and the *metopes*, or sculptured slabs between the *triglyphs*, were actually oblongs, but when seen from the ground level, appeared as squares.

Behold the Parthenon, the only perfect building erected by man: a gable-roofed house of wor-

ship, enclosed by double rows of columns, with sculptures in relief running round the upper parts of the walls, and in the pediments, statues of the gods. That is all—very simple, as fundamental as the sea—free from abstruse engineering problems in the modern sense, and not much different, in general plan, from the log cabin in which Abraham Lincoln was born. But to this day, architects, engineers, and mathematicians, hold conventions to discuss the scheme of proportions in the Parthenon, and to try to discover the secrets of its perfection.

To detain you a moment with a few architectural terms, let me point out the attributes of the Parthenon. The floor, or *stylobate*, is not separated from the columns by any slabs or wedges, and the columns, faintly pregnant in the middle sections, are crowned with capitals composed of a section of a cushion and a flat shelf called the *abacus*. Resting on the columns is the entablature—the division between the capitals and the roof. The lowermost part, known as the architrave, was originally made of wooden beams supported by wooden columns, but in time, marble replaced wood. Above the architrave were the oblong, sculptured *metopes* and the alternate *triglyphs*, or deeply fluted squares which once disguised the ends of wooden rafters. Along the top of the wall, ran the frieze, a band of marble encom-

THE TEMPLE

passing the building and ornamented with carved events dear to the hearts of the Greeks.

The pediments, or gable ends of the temple, were decorated with sculptures in full relief; that is to say, completely disengaged from the wall, and the subjects and qualities of these carvings, I shall discuss in our chapters on sculpture. I shall stop long enough to confess that only the Greeks would have reserved their highest sculptural capacities for the gables of a building—the space in which the central, standing figures must be about twice as large as life; and the subordinate figures, on either side, constrained to double up, or kneel and bend, and tail off towards the eaves in the manner of mermaids or serpents.

The frieze, 525 feet in perimeter, was conceived and executed as a processional relief of warriors on horseback, heavy-footed celebrities marching together, humble folk on foot, gay-garbed girls carrying olive boughs, old men with jars and liniment, and all moving to a sacred focus in order to reverence Athena, whose virginity was the trademark of the most artistic and irreverent city on earth. The cornices, exquisitely ornamented, were fitted with gargoyles to take care of the rain; and the edifice itself, shining in the sunlight, was painted in primary colors. The walls and columns were washed lightly with saffron and wax; the *triglyphs* were blue; the background of the frieze was blue; the *metopes* red, and the

sculptures carefully toned to enliven the pallor of marble.

But alas and alack—the Parthenon was reduced to a ruin by the barbarians, as the Greeks termed all aliens. The temple was used as a powder magazine by the Turks in their war against the Venetians, and in 1687 a well-aimed shell exploded within the sacred walls. In 1802, Lord Elgin, a cultured English plutocrat, acquired most of the remaining sculptures, and removed them to the British Museum, an act which aroused the poetic antipathy of Lord Byron in his *Curse of Minerva*.

The Ionic order of architecture was a little more elegant, and more graceful than the Doric, in its general applications. The columns were taller and slimmer, like the figure of a woman when she resorts to the stays and girdles accruing to polished metropolitan living, and the friezes were wrought with marvelous incision. In fact, the conventional ornamentation, such as the honeysuckle, and the egg and dagger, were executed by sculptors of the most distinguished rank, who regarded *all* branches of carving as of equal merit. The outstanding specimen of the Ionic Temple was the *Erechtheum* which stood near the Parthenon on the Acropolis, a temple celebrated because of its porch of Maidens or Caryatids, strapping girls who supported the weight of a roof on their classic heads. Again, I might say, only

THE TEMPLE

the Greeks would have carved the human form so wondrously in such an impossible position.

The third order of architecture, the Corinthian, was similar to the Ionic, except for the capital, a truly miraculous adoption of acanthus leaves—or chicory leaves in my garden—to the capital. The temple of Zeus in Athens is the finest extant example of this type of building; but subsequently, with the showy Romans, and then the French pseudo-classicists, and all the northern architects, the third Greek order was elaborated into every conceivable and conglomerate style of building from mausoleums to tribunals for supreme courts.

Another form of Greek construction should be mentioned—the outdoor meeting place, or amphitheater, which served the Athenian highbrows not only as a vehicle for dramatic offerings, but also as a public forum for social and political assemblies. The most beautiful of Greek amphitheaters was built by the younger Polycletus, son of the sculptor at Epidauros, an open air stadium, with a shell-like, semicircular arc of seats on a verdant hillside. Below, on the ground floor, was a circular stage, and the first-tier boxes of the citizens of Athens—the slaves and artists, let us remember, being shunted into the bleachers in the far corners. In these wild and spacious backgrounds, the tragedies of the great poets were performed, and these old plays must have struck terror into the hearts of the audience.

7. THE CULMINATION

[1]

We now enter the fifth century before Christ, the period in which the Greeks produced the greatest sculptors the world has known—with one massive and solitary exception, Michelangelo the Florentine. It may flabbergast the modern American, so inventive and deft, so resourceful and pagan and athletic, to be told that the greatest sculpture was planned and executed 2500 years ago—but such is the hard, irrefragable fact.

The Greeks had been grappling with sculpture for 2000 years, at first, in crude fetishes, and later, with accumulating experiences, to master technical difficulties and to make the solid art the predominant expressive language of their people. And as it is borne out by actualities, when conditions are propitious on earth, the climate in heaven is also clement—for in the fifth century B.C. the whole world conspired to give the

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Greeks the green light and to fulfill their predestined role in carving and incising.

The Persians descended on Athens, millions of slave-soldiers flogged into action, and by sheer force of numbers, destroyed Athens, the Acropolis and the immaculate temples. The Greeks, reciprocating, captured untold loot from their conquerors, and after the sack of Athens in 480 B.C., began to lay plans for a program of civic building unrivaled until the operations of the W.P.A. in the United States. During an interim of fifty peaceful years, the Greeks went to town, and to the top of the town, the rugged Acropolis, and when they had finished with their building and carving, they had left posterity something to emulate to the end of time.

As I have repeatedly insisted, the art of sculpture with the Greeks was not a matter of random statues here and there to be gobbled up by parvenu currant-growers with a bank balance. It was a local, national, religious and patriotic undertaking—far more important to the lives of everyday men and women than it has been in any subsequent period. At the opening of the fifth century B.C., on the island of Aegina, a temple was erected to a local goddess, Aphaea, an obscure deity resembling Athena. In the pediments of the temple, the supremacy of Greek sculpture began to be asserted: the faces of the warriors were somewhat inanimate and archaic,

but in their attitudes and muscular development, as they stood behind the reigning goddess or lay on the ground in the sharpening angles, they heralded the coming of the great age.

At Olympia, in northern Greece, in the first part of the fifth century, B.C., the temple of Zeus was erected, and in its pediments were sculptured representations of the gods in Parian marble, the figures being about one and a half times life size. No one can say with certainty who carved the nine-foot figures standing upright in the gables, the *Apollo* and the *Zeus*, but Alcamenes may have had a hand in them, and most likely Paeonius, whose draped *Victory* is one of the special treasures of antiquity. But it remains to say that the figures in the gable ends of the Olympian temple, by any canon of judgment, hold their own with the reigning masterpieces of sculpture in any age and in any country. In some respects, these effigies stand at the topmost pinnacle of Greek art—severe and menacing and barren of detail, when compared with those of the Parthenon, but so carved because they were to be contemplated from the street level, sixty feet below.

The sculptures of the temple of Zeus at Olympia are generally preferred today by specialists to those of the Parthenon, but only because the vogue of abstract art has emphasized form and structure at the expense of meaning. It doesn't

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matter—for in these powerful works we first encounter the successful solution of the problem of cramming figures into the acute angles of pediments. Prior to Olympia, figures were loosely organized and sprawling, with an erect commander in the highest vertical, and sea serpents trailing off in the angles.

The representational purport of the pediments is half-local, half-celestial. In the eastern triangle—all temples faced the east to invite the sun—the central figure, *Zeus*, nine feet high, presides over some indigenous tale of a knight unwilling to give his daughter in marriage because the oracle had foretold that otherwise he would be murdered by his son-in-law—a typical Greek fancy. The business of the western gable is more intelligible. It is a battle between the Centaurs, half-men and half-stallions, and the Lapiths, a race of Thessalian athletes. The Centaurs, dauntlessly virile, were always trying to rape the strong Lapith women, but always without satisfaction; and in the center of the foray stands perhaps the noblest figure in Greek art in anatomical strength and in filling the perfect mean between abstraction and realistic details. The figure is *Apollo*, planted upright, straight as a javelin, one arm outstretched, and the head turned—a head that sculptors of today love to imitate from the rippling conventionalized hair to the powerful cast of features.

ILLUSTRATIONS

A succession of masterpieces representing the art of sculpture in marble and bronze; the art of building in the one and only symbol of perfection—the Parthenon; and the art of small things made beautiful—coins, jewelry, costumes for women, and headgear for the warrior.



I. HERA OF SAMOS

The first Greek figures were hewn from trunks of trees, with flutings to suggest drapery, and the head projecting from the top. This study in marble, with the carefully incised lines and the visible toes, is probably a copy of an earlier work in wood.

Paris, Louvre. Sixth century B.C.



2. YOUTH

When the Greeks first began to carve in marble, they followed the conventions of the Egyptians, and produced a large number of male figures called Youths, or Apollos. The type is easily recognized by a slim-waisted body, long hanging arms, the left foot advanced, and the suggestion of a smile.

*New York, Metropolitan Museum.
Early sixth century B. C.*



3. GIRL WITH PIGEONS

A beautiful example of the sculptured tablet, or stele, used as a gravestone. Carved in relief, with the girl's classic profile, the simply designed birds, the chaste drapery, and the serene expression, it marks the beginning of the purist style. *New York, Metropolitan Museum. Middle of the fifth century B.C.*



4. CHARIOTEER OF DELPHI

One of the few original masterpieces in bronze now extant. The upright driver, with raised arms to hold the reins, was one of a life-size group in charge of a four-horse chariot. The eyes are made of onyx and white enamel.

*Delphi, Museum.
Early fifth century B. C.*



5. DISCUS THROWER

Probably a copy in marble of an original bronze by Myron, who was famous for introducing movement into sculpture and for his studies of muscular action. *Rome, National Museum. Fifth century B.C.*



6. APOLLO

The central figure from the western pediment of the Temple of Zeus at Olympia, and one of the grandest figures in Greek art. The nine-foot god, dividing fighting groups of Centaurs and Lapiths, was placed 60 feet above the ground, and thus was carved with little detail.

Olympia, Museum.
460 B.C.



7. VICTORY by Paeonius

The goddess was represented as actually in flight, and before the mutilations of time, sported a pair of wings and a billowing robe held by the left hand.

Olympia, Museum. 425 B.C.



8. BIRTH OF APHRODITE, detail

Central figure of the celebrated panels known as the Ludovisi Throne. In this relief the goddess of love is rising from the waves into the outstretched arms of her handmaidens. *Rome, National Museum.*
Fifth century B.C.



9. LUDOVISI THRONE, detail

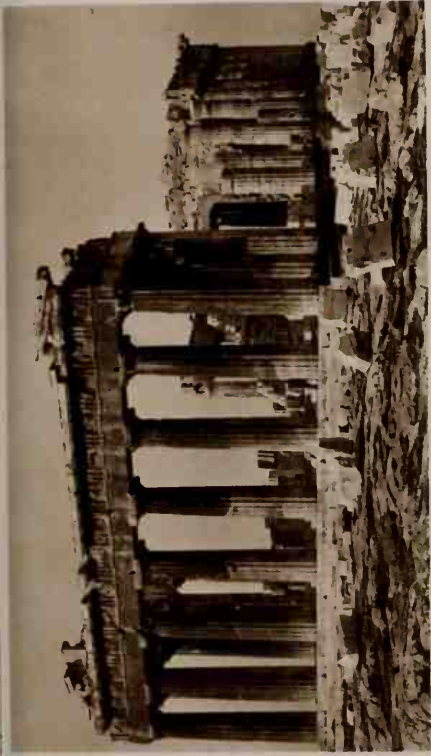
One of the side panels, in relief, of the memorial to Aphrodite. The marvelously draped figure is probably a worshiper of the goddess in the act of dropping incense into a candelabrum.

Rome, National Museum. Fifth century B.C.



10. THE ACROPOLIS, Athens

A long-range photograph of all that remains of the most famous hilltop in history. In the Periclean age, the road from the lower city skirted the Temple of Theseus in the foreground, and then, by flights of stairs, ascended to the Acropolis, or highest point of the city.



II. THE PARTHENON, Athens

Built during the years from 447 to 431 B. C., under the supervision of Phidias, and almost destroyed in 1687 by an explosion when it was used as a powder magazine by the Turks. This view from the northeast shows the perfection of the Doric columns and the metopes and triglyphs above them.



12. WOUNDED AMAZON

The favorite antagonists of the Greeks were the Amazons, or women warriors, a mythical race combining the strength of the athlete with the beauty of the goddess, and hence a favorite subject for sculptors. This wounded warrior is a Roman copy in marble of a Greek bronze.

New York, Metropolitan Museum. Fifth century B. C.



13. HEAD OF ATHENA PARTHENOS, small copy

In 438 B. C., the sculptor Phidias completed his cult statue of Athena, a colossal work, forty feet in height, of gold and ivory. The original figure stood in the cella of the Parthenon, but nothing of it remains except small copies, of which this is perhaps the most faithful. *Athens, National Museum.*



14. THE FATES

The Fates were originally a part of the eastern pediment of the Parthenon, and were removed in the nineteenth century to London. The fateful women are robed in rippling, folding garments

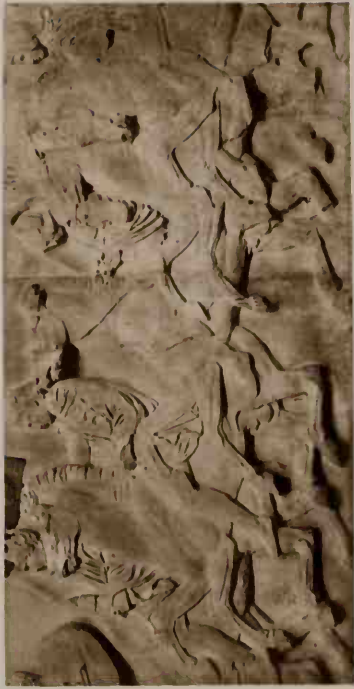
to cover and conceal the flesh beneath, to caress the eye with the glory of consummate carving, and to set the standard of classic drapery for all time. *London, British Museum. Fifth century B. C.*



15. ILISSOS

Reclining figure from the western pediment of the Parthenon. This representation of a minor deity associated with Athens, recumbent to fit into the narrowing gable, was sculptured when the Greeks had mastered the secrets of physical perfection.

London, British Museum. Fifth century B.C.



16. HORSEMEN FROM PARTHENON FRIEZE

The horses, on parade in honor of Athena, are among the most beautiful creations in art. Small-sized animals, they are dramatically tense and alive, horses with personality and

as smooth and shapely as the bodies of goddesses. They were carved in low relief—only two and a half inches above the marble ground.

London, British Museum. Fifth century B. C.



17. DIADOUMENOS

Roman copy of a Greek work executed by Polycletus about 425 B. C. The young man is supposedly trying on a fillet, or head band, and is characteristic of Polycletus, who was praised for his powerfully modeled, athletic figures.

New York, Metropolitan Museum.



18. HERMES by Praxiteles

The torso of a languid god holding an infant in the bend of his arm, and the only existing statue unreservedly assigned to an individual Greek artist. A softly rounded job giving the illusion in marble of a perfectly organized muscular structure, and one of the most remarkable examples in all art of cold stone coming to life and simulating organic tissue. *Olympia, Museum. Fourth century B.C.*



19. APHRODITE OF CNIDUS

Copy of the most famous statue executed by Praxiteles. The lower part of the figure wears a metal drapery, the prudery of Roman censors. The statue was carved from clay models fashioned from the body of the celebrated courtesan, Phryne, mistress of the sculptor. *Rome, Vatican.*
Fourth century B.C.



20. APHRODITE OF MELOS

As the Venus of Milo, the large-bodied goddess remains the most beloved piece of statuary in the world. A later Greek work, but sculptured in the tradition of the highest attainments, the Venus symbolizes the nobility, the serenity, and the purity of womanhood.

*Paris, Louvre.
Third century B. C.?*



21. ZEUS AND THE GIANTS

In Pergamon, a town in Smyrna, the Hellenistic Greeks carved an enormous altar with battle scenes in which Zeus and Athena participated—one of the most amazing friezes ever contrived. This detail reveals the conflict between gods and giants, a ferociously agitated performance and a far cry from the Olympian calm of the classic Greeks.

Berlin. Second century B.C.



22. BORGHESE WARRIOR

In this mighty figure the realism of Hellenistic sculpture is carried to the furthestmost limits. Nominally a warrior, the figure is really a study in muscular structure strained to excess, and as such, is used as a model in art academies.

Paris, Louvre. 86 B. C.



23. OLD MARKET WOMAN

One of the finest examples of the genre figures introduced into sculpture by the Hellenistic Greeks. Though a little the worse for wear, it is plain that the old woman, with her basket of fruit and her chickens, has been to the town market.

*New York, Metropolitan Museum.
Second century B.C.*



24. THE PRIZE FIGHTER

Bronze figure dating from about 50 B. C. and cast in emulation of an earlier model. The over-developed muscles of the torso of the old pugilist, and the cauliflower ear, are unmistakable evidence of his profession. *Rome, Museo delle Terme.*



25. APOLLO BELVEDERE

A copy in marble of an earlier study in bronze, and once esteemed as the noblest conception of the classic spirit in sculpture. The somewhat affected pose is the result of a faulty restoration of the lower parts of the arms.

*Rome, Vatican.
Second century B.C.*



26. WOMAN PLAYING THE LYRE

All the paintings by the great Greek masters have disappeared, and such wall paintings as exist are Hellenistic or Graeco-Roman. The playing woman comes from a villa near Pompeii, and as a technical job, with the forms closely observed and the illusion of the third dimension well realized, the work is far in advance of twelfth century Italian painting.

New York, Metropolitan Museum.

First century B.C.



27. VOLUTE CRATER

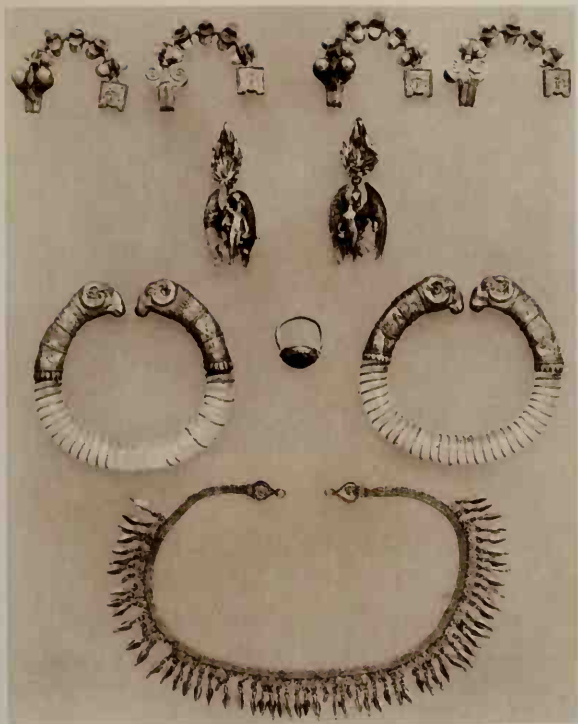
The making of pottery was a national industry in Greece, and vase painters were as renowned as sculptors. The volute crater was a bowl for mixing beverages and the decorations are concerned with a battle between the Greeks and the Amazons. The figures are terra cotta on a black ground.

New York, Metropolitan Museum. 450 B.C.



28. BRONZE WATER JUG

The Greeks were not content with purely functional utensils. They shaped their bronze kitchenware into works of art, making the objects faultless in their proportions and appropriately ornamented. *New York, Metropolitan Museum. 425 B.C.*



29. SET OF GOLD JEWELRY

With a few hand tools, the ancient craftsmen created the most exquisite forms of jewelry—earrings, bracelets, necklaces, finger rings and hair ornaments, all delicately wrought and never worn as mere emblems of wealth.

New York, Metropolitan Museum. Fourth century B.C.



30. FOUR DESIGNS FROM SEALSTONES

In semi-precious stones such as amethyst, agate and rock crystal, the Greeks incised beautiful designs from which impressions were made in wax.

New York, Metropolitan Museum. Fourth century, B.C.



31. GREEK COINS

Every important city had its own coinage, and the finest pieces of metal were carefully designed and impressed by the most gifted craftsmen. The coins could not be stacked, and the designs were usually of religious import.

New York, Metropolitan Museum. Fourth century B.C.?



32. HELMET

A masterpiece of military headgear, probably by a colonial artist of the fourth century B.C. Nothing of modern manufacture has matched this superb bronze head covering, with the brimless, close-fitting crown and the touches of ornamentation.

New York, Metropolitan Museum.

7. THE CULMINATION

[II]

The big three of Greek sculpture were Polycletus, who maintained that all creative difficulties in art—in sculpture and temples alike—could be resolved by mathematical relationships and proportions; Myron, the author of the far-famed *Discus Thrower*, and other athletic images; and Phidias, director of public works, architect of the new temple of the Virgin and builder of the gigantic chryselephantine statues of *Athena*, in the *cella* of the Parthenon, and of *Zeus*, at Olympia, and overseer of the ornamental carvings of the Parthenon. Pericles and Phidias, wise men and politicians in the best sense, collaborated hand in glove in the crowning monuments of Greek art.

Today, with the archeologists horning in and the skeptics aspersing cherished attributions, the story of Greek art is far from simple; and though there is much truth in the old appraisals, it is now agreed that no existing statues can be ascribed to the sculptors just named. When Pericles came into power, he transferred, by a political

maneuver, the contents of the community chest of the archipelago from Delos to Athens, thereby pouring fabulous sums for art into the local coffers. A great statesman and a true, but slippery leader, he was the head of the Athenian democracy from 460 to 435 B.C., and strong enough to be a benevolent dictator. His funeral oration, delivered to commemorate the luckless *hoplites* whose throats were cut by Persian scimitars, has most of the qualities of eternal majesty. The address is, I believe, in its notions of freedom, much like the homespun utterances of Abraham Lincoln, but it is worth noting that it contains no allusions to the gods whom ostensibly the educated Athenians worshiped. Apparently Pericles believed that the transcendent art of his colleague Phidias could propitiate the heavenly host, with the occasional intercession of the Virgin goddess. All that is known, for certain, about Phidias is that he was responsible for the Parthenon and the sculptures pertaining to it, and that he was, in the recorded opinion of the Greeks, the creator of gigantic statues which have long since disappeared—statues extolled by his fellows as the mightiest, by far, in their annals.

In the gable ends of the Parthenon were carvings referring to the birth of Athena—the myth was that she sprang full-panoplied from the head of Zeus—and the battle between Athena and Poseidon for the sovereignty of Attica. In the

metopes, the square blocks between the fluted *triglyphs*, were dramatic episodes from the old familiar conflict of the Centaurs and Lapiths; and cut into the frieze in low-relief, a linear field of 525 feet, was a continuous array of mortals in the Panathenaic procession which occurred every four years when the marshaled citizens carried the *peplos* to the shrine of the Virgin. The procession contained superbly conditioned youths holding their horses or riding them, mounted soldiers, old men bearing incense and leading the animals selected for the sacrifices, lovely garlanded maidens, and the pious folk of the town.

The choicest statues of the Parthenon were indescribably beautiful creations of man—small-size horses dramatically tense and alive, rearing and advancing, horses with personality, with fire in their nostrils and bodies as smooth and shapefully as the flesh of a goddess—horses emulated by artists down the ages from Leonardo and Rubens to western Americans like John Steuart Curry. And these little Parthenon quadrupeds were relieved only two and a half inches from the background and confined in blocks of marble about three feet on each side!

The choicest statues of the Parthenon were purchased by Lord Elgin, 150 years ago, amid the metrical howls of Lord Byron, and presented to the British Museum in London, for safe-keeping. In that dreary, but admirably directed mu-

seum, you may see, if you are lucky enough to travel, the *Three Fates*, unfortunately now headless, *metopes* of the *Centaurs*, and reclining male figures such as the *Ilissos*, the *Theseus*, and the *Dionysus*. The woman-statues—the *Fates*, *Demeter*, *Persephone* and *Iris*—are draped, and the arrangement of the rippling, folded, simulated garments, composed to cover yet to reveal the flesh beneath, and to caress the eye with the majesty of consummate chiseling, has set the standard for classic drapery for all ages. When modern sculptors have draped figures in mind, they think of the goddesses of the Parthenon, and then in despair, carve their subjects in the nude—and the best they can do with the naked figure is to imitate the Greeks, even to the silly business of modeling figures with no heads and arms. That is a cheap solution of the difficulty of putting together in perfect relationship a complete figure. The Greeks, I hardly need say, never produced armless or truncated bodies; they created ideal, or reconstructed forms, far more perfect than nature made mortal man or woman.

With respect to the colossal statues built by Phidias, we must accept the verdict of the Greeks who revered the great figures above all other images. The *Athena*, a gold and ivory giantess forty feet high, towered aloft in the *cella* of the Parthenon, a room ninety by sixty feet. She must have been an overwhelming sight in such close

THE CULMINATION

quarters, and such was the intention of the builder. We have a number of small copies of the statues—and how true they are to the original is a matter of conjecture. They are heavy and over-elaborated and not very impressive. Of the chryselephantine statue of *Zeus* at Olympia, a seated figure ten or twelve times as large as life, we have no visual records except crude reproductions pressed into a couple of coins.

We must also refer conjecturally to two famous contemporaries of Phidias. The first, Myron, is known the world over for his *Discobolus*, which survives in copies in the British Museum and the Vatican, and in a synthetic reconstruction in the Terme Museum in Rome. The sculptured athlete "is stooping to make the throw, turning round towards the hand that holds the discus and slightly bending over on one knee, ready to straighten up after the throw." Myron's equally famous *Athena and Marsyas*, in which the satyr is about to pick up a flute discarded by the goddess, also survives in the form of copies. Myron worked exclusively in bronze from clay models of men, women and animals in action. The second contemporary, Polycletus, is little more than a name but a sacred name to the ancient Greeks. He was a marvelous technician who planned his bronze athletes by a scheme of mathematical ratios, but his statues, once so beloved by an athletic race, have vanished forever.

Among the fifth century masterpieces remaining to the world is the *Charioteer of Delphi*, probably one of a group of warriors riding together, and a work uniting the old, somewhat inflexible sculpture to the grace of the Parthenon figures. The *Charioteer*, wearing the long *chiton* of his profession, is a six-footer, and his almond-shaped eyes are made of enamel and onyx.

Another extant masterpiece is the *Ludovisi Throne*, three panels in relief and jointly bearing the name of a Roman collector. The front panel represents the birth of Aphrodite, with two handmaidens lifting the goddess from the waves; and carved in the side panels are the figures of nude courtesans playing the double flute—only courtesans were portrayed in the nude at that date—and a veiled woman dropping incense into a candelabrum. I should also mention the beloved interpretation of the *Daughter of Niobe* in Rome. This guiltless young woman is in her death-throes, shot in the back by Artemis, who was enraged because the girl's mother had boasted of the beauty of her daughters.

8. COLOR AND CHARACTER

To the modern world, the tragedy of Greek art is the disappearance of original works of genius. The temples are gone, for the most part, or exist only as ruins; and the great statues, which meant so much to the people responsible for them, live only in the apostrophes of ancient historians. Works in bronze were stolen by barbarians and converted into cannon; and those in marble were thrown into mountain chasms, or carted off by vandals, ultimately to be lost. The consequence is that the study of Greek art is bedeviled by interminable scholastic bickerings, and quarrels over authenticities, originals and copies. Despite these obstacles, the salvage is sufficient—and far more than sufficient—to justify my opening dictum: The Greeks were the most artistic people ever to inhabit this planet.

According to the Athenian intellectuals, and indeed the rank and file of sensitive *peltasts*, the unapproachable sublimity of their sculpture was

embodied in the colossal monuments of Phidias. I have already noted the disappearance and character of these gigantic performances, and there is little more that can be added. The super-size deities of Phidias must have struck the Greeks with the force of something out of this world. In fact, they were so intended by the artist, and when the usually recalcitrant citizens looked upon them, they were terrified, exalted and temporarily obedient.

Of the thirty-foot bronze by Phidias, the *Athena Promachos*, or Guardian, once standing in front of the Parthenon, not a vestige endures, save perhaps one miniature copy; and the seated *Zeus*, once the pride of Olympia, is equally nonexistent. We have a little more evidence of the aspect of the forty-foot *Athena* in the *cella* or front chamber of the Parthenon. The goddess, neither old nor young, but serene and ageless, was fully gowned in her Doric *peplos*, or beautifully fluted slip. She wore a helmet ornamented with a sphinx and two winged horses, and elaborate earrings often copied by our costume jewelers; and she carried a shield embossed with scenes from the battles between the Greeks and the Amazons. To erect such a statue—and, remember, it was pieced together in sections of gold and ivory—was an engineering job of high competency in any age; and Phidias supervised it. When the humble Athenian sinner entered the temple in

the early morning, as the rosy-fingered dawn revealed the white and gold splendor of the Virgin, he was penitent, exalted, and filled with holy terror.

The super-statues have followed the old Greeks into Hades, or have found their way piecemeal into the glittering possessions of wealthy potentates, but we possess, despite the ravages of time and the barbarians, an abundance of regional carvings. It is this heritage that agitates the intellectuals, who would find in the works of the Greeks, not the beauty of the body and the glory of the human spirit, but the name of the sculptor and the dates of his birth and death. I have to say, however, in deference to solid scholarship, that only one statue has come down to us, which, incontestably may be ascribed to a specific artist—and that statue is the *Hermes* of Praxiteles, now the center of attraction in the museum of Olympia.

In my teen-age, I was under the illusion that the temples and statues of the Hellenes were as immaculately white as the snows of Mt. Olympus—an appropriate condition, I fancied, for the pure, clean, classic spirit. In my skeptical twenties, I discovered that the Greeks *painted* their temples and *colored* their statues. At first shock, the visualization of this fact was revolting, but as I grew older and more reflective, I became convinced that coloration was a wonderful idea; in

truth, an indispensable provision to eliminate the gravestone coldness and neutrality of naked marble, and a vivid means of welcoming the crystalline sunlight as it purified the temples and statues. Let us remember that the statues were not intended for the musty twilight of museum basements where white marble is soon neutralized into dusty lumps of clammy stone, not quite living or dead.

There is a diversity of judgment on the detailed color schemes employed by the Greeks, but all who have examined the evidence agree that the gamut was systematic and comprehensive. As for the temples, the walls were untouched and also the columns except for a faint wash of waxen earth tones; but the pediments and friezes were industriously tinted. It was the practice of sculptors, aware that their marbles were to be placed in the open air, to anoint their nudes with a waxen compound of lucent golden tones in order to conceal the epicene whiteness of native stone. The effect was a living organism in the sunlight, the tanned body of a swimmer. The hair of the statues was dyed a deep red, together with the lips and eyebrows, and the irises of the eyes, to contrast with the black pupils. When the figures were stationed in the pediments of the temples, high above the ground level, the entire background of the gables was painted blue; the draperies of the female figures lightly colored

at the borders, and the nude bodies of the males treated with a chemical sun-tan.

Adverting again to the question of the age-long supremacy of Greek sculpture, I can readily supply an answer that is profoundly simple on the one hand, and totally unsatisfactory on the other. The esthetic Hellenes needed sculptures—as my own son needs music and sports—and were equipped to make stern appraisals of the efforts of artists, and to compel them to do their level best or be sent to barbarian lands in disgrace. Today there is no intelligent check on the propensities of the artist, and his wildest, and frequently idiotic, propensities are exploited by critics and magazine editors out to capitalize on anything sensational. The second part of the question is well-nigh unanswerable—something like elucidating the mystery of genius—something beyond the national, religious, and patriotic qualities which the Greeks made implicit in their statuary.

When you stroll through the Metropolitan Museum, you may aimlessly train your gaze on a little classic head having a nose long since mutilated by adversities. Suddenly this head becomes a living, sentient maiden; and when you glance at the headless torso of an athletic male suppliant, the marble bursts into organic life. Your heart leaps up, and you behold the magic of creation that electrifies the inert stone, and

makes you honor the Greeks. But when you examine the statues in modern exhibitions, your depression is deeper than the pit of a tomb. Nothing comes to life. The old academic figures are so many dead ducks, and the modernist stuff is an assemblage of hatching tadpoles, or decapitated scarecrows in wood, or metal gimcracks of exceptional imbecility. What is the explanation of this eternal discrepancy?

I do not know, but I will hazard several guesses, not cursorily, but in the light of year-by-year reflections going back to the stark line-drawings in my first Greek books. If you could have before you the *Apollo* of the Temple of Olympia, some of the Parthenon figures, the *Winged Victory*, and the *Venus of Milo*, I'm sure you would admit that sculpture is the most soul-satisfying of all arts. The explanation of this will never be resolved, but the riddle is not beyond conjecture.

Let it be understood, at once, that no Greek, male or distaff, was endowed with the classic profile—the sharp, straight line from nose-tip to the top of the forehead. In evolving an ideal type, the ancient artists, contemptuous of the scimitar curves of their enemies, the Hittites and the wily Egyptians, went to the opposite extreme, and called the result the classic, and, of course, typically Grecian profile. Furthermore, no human being was ever graced with the perfect lines and

proportions of the Greek statues. The Athenian artists, refining with infinite subtlety on the organic fact, the nude body, altered the contours and masses of the face, the torso and the extremities, thus reconstructing the human form and creating the classic figure, which, in academic hands, has been slavishly imitated from age to age. Perfection, as everybody knows, does not exist in real life—but it was brought into art by the Greeks.

From the pediment of the temple at Aegina we have a *Dying Warrior*, who will never die; the *Apollo*, from Olympia, stern of face, and powerful, yet supple of body, will live as long as marble coheres; and in the sculptures of the Parthenon, we preserve the flowers of antiquity, not the hyacinths worn by gilded, effeminate youths, nor the sunflowers of the processions, but the cultural flowers created by the artists. The giant statues of Phidias, from which the lines, wrinkles, creases and blemishes of the human body were removed in the interest of nobility and power, are gone, but the Parthenon, the highwater mark of classic art, has yielded up a sufficiency of treasures. No living forms, let me repeat, ancient Greek or modern American, were ever half so beautiful as the draped goddesses of the shrine, and no horses ever galloped that were so personalized—and sentient—and that is one of the excuses for the existence of art.

9. HERMES AND APHRODITE

Nations, like individuals, accept the challenge of life, rise to fruition, then decline and fall; and in Greece, even the immortal gods grew old and outmoded, and surrendered their omnipotence to lesser deities and to apotheosized warriors like Alexander the Great. In the fifth century before Christ, the renowned sculptors paid homage to Zeus, Athena and Apollo, implacable gods and not above chronic meddling in earthly affairs. The peerless statues of the century, the giant *Zeus*, the *Athena Parthenos*, the Olympian *Apollo*, and the carvings of the temples, were ideal conceptions; that is to say, though based upon the human figure as it physically exists, they were reconstructed and re-proportioned in order to create superior and god-like forms.

In the final years of the fifth century, Athens was captured and humiliated in the Peloponnesian War, but her intellectual sovereignty lin-

gered on during most of the succeeding century, and was carried far and wide into colonial outposts and the bivouacs of the Roman barbarians. Socrates, tried by jury, and found guilty, drank the hemlock to atone for the crime—unproved—of corrupting young Athenians; and Plato spun poetic cobwebs of philosophy on behalf of abstractions in the arts and a political republic organized on military blueprints, but with a signal differentiation—the philosophers were to be the kings and not the generals. Plato ruled artists out of his republic. He feared them, and for good reasons, since Athens had given herself to the arts with a completeness and abandonment unmatched in recorded history; and he was alarmed by the power of artists, by their passions, and by their influence. In desperation, he turned to the philosophers who would rule Greece in collusion with a militia of mercenaries and young *hoplites* reared by women held in domestic bondage for breeding purposes.

In this transitional world, sculpture continued to be the predominant art, but with less ethereal ideals. Not Zeus, Apollo and Athena, were the favored crew, but Hermes, Aphrodite, Dionysus, Pan, the satyrs and all the lower, erotic members of the hierarchy. For the first time, the raptures and seductions of the flesh came into sculpture; and the goddesses, heretofore draped, now appeared in the state of nature—for a while with

a flow of garments below the navel, soon with a hand shielding the pudenda, and finally in complete and undulant nakedness. Notwithstanding the tendency of today to rave over archaic sculpture, and to take Praxiteles down a peg, the art of carving in fourth century Hellas cannot be said to have declined precipitately.

Let us consider Praxiteles, for example, born about 385 B.C. In the museum at Olympia stands his *Hermes*, the one and only extant statue, as I have noted, that is unreservedly assigned to an individual Greek artist. It is a seven-foot job, a suave young man leaning casually on his left arm which rests on a draped stump, and in the bend of the arm is an infant, not particularly well made and most likely Dionysus. The Greeks did not relish children in public and seldom brought them into art. In the fourth century, *Hermes*, the languid god, in some of his offices, rivaled *Apollo*, and was the co-guardian of fertility and prize fights. Originally symbolized by the phallus, he became correspondingly esteemed as the sterner gods lost caste.

It may be said, without danger of contradiction, that Praxiteles has no competitors—not even Rodin, a wizard at rippling daylight over nude forms—in compelling marble to convey the feeling of actual flesh, radiant and tender, and yet controlled by the firmer tissue beneath the surface. The young *Hermes*, relaxed in an S posture

—a bodily contour defined as the line of beauty by the English master, Hogarth—is one of the most marvelous pieces of graven handiwork in the world. In earlier sculpture, the Olympian *Apollo*, for instance, and down to the statues of the Parthenon, the human frame was articulated like a plastic coat of mail—in broad planes beautifully joined but with little fleshly emphasis. In the *Hermes*, the figure is composed of minutely related planes which flow and fold and coalesce into a rounded body, and yet give the illusion of a perfectly organized musculature underneath. This is perhaps the most consummate job of carving, of compelling stone to simulate organic tissue, ever realized in art. The wonderful head of hair is freed from conventionalized pleatings; the overhanging brows and deep-set eyes awaken the reflective vitality of the youth, and the figure, as a unit, is one of the sculptured masterpieces of mankind.

Other statues by Praxiteles, copies made by Roman slaves, have survived the vandals; a mirthful satyr, a couple of erotic figures, and the nude *Aphrodite* about to take a dip in the blue Ionian waters. The copy of the *Aphrodite* in the Vatican is only fair, and the stewards of that great museum have blushing covered the lower part of the goddess of love with ugly metal drapery supplied by local tinsmiths. The Praxitelean *Aphrodite*, unlike the earlier types with their

round faces and stately thighs, has an oval face, a liquid come-hither expression, and a middle section swelling to the golden mean between the reproductive background of the matron and the fertile lines of the maiden. According to the stories—which are credible enough—Praxiteles carved the statues from clay models adapted from the body of the celebrated courtesan, Phryne, his mistress. In earlier times, such an impious act would have forced the sculptor to a long draught of hemlock.

The statues of Praxiteles were colored—deftly tinted and pictorially embellished to kill the deathly pallor of raw marble, and the *Hermes*, erected to stand in the sun on a pedestal near a street corner on the Acropolis, must have been an object lesson to every Athenian athlete or politician. The body was washed with liquid wax into a sun-tanned tone; the eyebrows were blue, the lips scarlet, the hair a vivid red dusted with gold—all to enhance the character of the god in the transparent atmosphere of the upper city.

As for Scopas, another luminary of the fourth century, we can only speculate and hearken to the archeological grave diggers. From all verbal accounts, and from the remnants of the temple at Tegea, it would appear, beyond question, that Scopas introduced strong emotional states and passion into Greek sculpture, thus ruffling the

Olympian serenity ruling the art from prehistoric times. He transformed the face, by working on the lips, the cheekbones and the eye sockets, into a realistic agent of passionate strains and agonies which horrified the older generation brought up on Phidias.

The third member of the fourth-century triumvirate was Lysippus, the pet sculptor of Alexander the Great, and the man who revived the use of bronze after it had been pushed aside for marble. It would be disingenuous to attribute very much to his fastidious hands, but it is proper to point out that he followed the drift towards effeminacy in sculpture, and revised the proportions of the human figure into elongated, elegant athletes and more slender goddesses such as the Medicean Venus at Florence.

The oriental propensity of the Greeks to homosexuality—in philosophical theory, if not in widespread physical practice—culminated in a succession of sculptured hermaphrodites, and in the metaphysical sex relations promulgated by Plato. But these enervating elements did not represent a concurrent disintegration of the more rugged aspects of life and art. In Persian territory, at the Mausoleum in Halicarnassus, the tomb of King Mausolus, a group of sculptors including Scopas and possibly Praxiteles, executed a monument of all but the highest rank, a job fully as vigorous as the ornaments of the Parthenon, if

not so refined. The portrait statues of Mausolus and his consort, Artemisia, are about as distinguished as such things can be; the gods are realistic and intensely alive, and the warriors and horsemen more actively engaged than the animals and men on the Acropolis. The softer trends of the age I shall discuss in the next chapter on the Alexandrian Hellenes.

Two statues, however, both originals and both of unknown authorship, should be recorded among the classic masterpieces. The first is the *Winged Victory of Samothrace*, in the Louvre, one of the great carvings of the world in any man's gallery, and dating from the year of the battle off the coast of the Aegean island around 300 B.C. The goddess is presented at the instant of a happy landing on the prow of a warship; the head and arms are gone; but the figure, despite the mutilations of time, would not suffer by comparison of its construction and its magnificent drapery with those of the statues of the Parthenon. In some respects, it is the most beautifully draped figure in Greek art, not so subtly carved as the *Fates*, but more rugged and powerful. The Greeks were absolutely unparalleled in creating idealized figures to inspire their warriors to victory.

The *Venus of Milo*, or *Aphrodite from Melos* in the Greek, has not been displaced as the most famous single piece of statuary in existence. A

vast amount of irrelevant tommyrot has been written about the missing arms of the large-bodied woman, and almost as much archeological rot about the date of her birth. The *Venus* most probably was carved in the later days of Greek art—in the third or second century B.C., but in the tradition of the supreme achievements—and possibly because she was brought into being on an island where sculptors were not executing sleek pretty-boys, she is still as breathtaking as Rodin said she was, and as inspiring as the Greeks intended her to be. If the women of the world are to be symbolized in a single figure, serene but capable, refined and ample and noble, lofty without being overbearing, and pure without sacrifice of femininity, then the *Venus of Milo* fills all the requirements. It is better to see her in the Louvre, but even in small photographs she justifies the superlatives.

10. HELLENISTIC ART

Alexander the Great, whom the oracle pronounced invincible, succeeded his father in 336 B.C., at the age of twenty; and when he died thirteen years afterward, weeping because there were no more worlds to conquer, he had spread the culture of Greece from kingdom to kingdom and had prepared the vanquished nations for the imperialism of Rome. Athens forfeited her supremacy in art to Egypt and the Orientals, and the center of intellectuality in the *Hellenistic* period, to use the historical term, shifted to Alexandria in Africa; to Antioch in Syria; and to Pergamon, in Asia Minor. The city states of Greece and her colonies, once famous for their democratic government and their untrammelled freedom in the arts, were dispossessed by the absolute monarchies of the East, and the glory of Greek art—with its perfection and purity—was superseded by grandiose effects and naturalistic brilliance.

The Hellenistic continuation of Greek art, after the fall of Athens in the third century B.C., is generally classified as decadent and effeminate, or informed by violence and nervous disorders. None of these descriptions is quite accurate. It is true that the art of this age of internationalization was inferior to the loftiest attainments of the Athenians, but it was characterized by physical energy and abounding vitality—and was far from decadent, with one exception.

The exception was at Alexandria, in Egypt, the rendezvous of international traders in culture, where high-toned museums were established, and marble conservatories of culture in which effeminate esthetes congregated to gabble in the academic language of Attica. The esthetes of Alexandria made a holy show of themselves, parading about town in jewels and fine linen, and lording it over the common man. The favorite subject in art was the hermaphrodite, and the androgynists in charge of the museums reduced sculpture to impotence and degradation.

In the more manly centers of Antioch and Pergamon, artists were busy cultivating several provinces of art unexplored—and avoided—by the Greeks in the homeland. The sculptors of Athens, you will recall, first carved gods and men in the same generalized fashion; next, they idealized their deities and produced their greatest works; and finally, when it came to portraiture, they

could not bring themselves to depict an individual man or woman. The bust of Pericles, for example, might just as well have been the bust of Zeus, or Mars, or any other generality. Certainly, it conveys no idea of Pericles, as Aspasia knew him, the man whom the Greeks recognized when he walked to the *agora* or forum to address the skeptical democrats. The point is that no art contains the sum total of human virtues, and the Greeks held portraiture in low esteem, well knowing that in the course of time, one head was as good as another, and infinitely better, in fact, if it were beautifully constructed.

The world loosely organized by Alexander, with nation linked to nation, and the attenuated splendor of Athens, along with the might of the armies holding it together, made room for the individual man in art, the specific person with his strength and his imperfections. Thus portrait sculpture was introduced, and when the Romans followed the Greeks, they seized upon portraiture and worked it into sterility and death. The Hellenistic sculptors in the world of Alexander the Great, also extended the boundaries of art, admitting barbarians—the artists of other lands—into the fold, and exhibiting no bias against realistic or intimate subject matter. Sculptors, taking their cue from wall painters, began to carve landscape effects in relief, and even bucolic scenes, while painters occupied themselves with domestic ac-

tivities, nuptial enterprises, and various and sundry affairs which would have made the guardians of the pure classic spirit in Athens swear and gasp in disgust.

The finest sculpture of the Hellenistic age was produced in Pergamon, a small town founded north of Smyrna when Alexander's generals were struggling after the great man's death to grab as much of the empire as they could police. The little town increased to the size of a province when it successfully resisted an invasion of a horde of Gauls who, far from home, pillaged Asia Minor at will. To commemorate the defeat of the Gauls, King Attalus ordered appropriate offerings in the shape of bronze statues, *ex votos* to thank the gods, and other carvings consistent with victory and splendor. These events took place about 240 B.C., and Pergamon became an important center of art as well as a military capital of the first order.

Somewhat later, about 160 B.C., the military successes of the growing capital were commemorated on a colossal scale by King Eumenes II, and in one monument, an altar of white marble, the art of sculpture was invigorated to such a degree as to enlist the critical suffrage or adulation of thinking men of all subsequent generations. The great frieze round the altar is not precisely classic; and it is neither pure nor ideal, but it is prodigiously effective, not only in the

energy that animates the stone, but in the fulfillment of its avowed purpose. Most of it, fortunately for posterity, was painstakingly removed by German archeologists and taken to Berlin where it may now be seen in most of its glory.

The great white altar, the most conspicuous of a group of buildings erected on a hillside, was designed in the form of a square platform pierced on one side by a broad flight of stairs, and set off by a colonnade. Below the platform, in one unbroken stream, ran an encircling frieze, 400 feet in length by seven in height. The frieze was carved into what the erudite Germans call a *gigantomachia*, meaning a furious combat, on a superhuman scale, between the forces of heaven and earth. It was a battle between gods and giants, high gods and second-string gods arrayed against top-flight giants and powerful figures in the fantastic shapes of man and beast combined. Before the erosion of time, the gods and giants were conveniently labeled with chiseled names beneath them, and signed by the artists employed. Now we can only speculate on the significance of many of the duels.

The impression created by the frieze in its pristine setting must have been overpowering—a desperate struggle between celestial gladiators and giants of magnificent physical development, humanly fashioned in the upper anatomy, but

endowed with wings, and with legs dwindling off into serpents. The manifold agonies must be mentioned briefly. A giant aims a missile at Hecate, a tri-formed adversary because of her triple jurisdiction over earth, heaven and Hades, while Hecate's dog bites him in the thigh; and Artemis engages the giant Otus in a fight to the death. Another giant tussles with a dog which has seized him by the neck, and a third lies prostrate on the ground. Artemis gouges the corpse with her heel, while letting fly an arrow at Otus—and the battle rages.

All this, of course, is far from the serenity, the poise, the ineffably controlled art of the Greeks in the classic centuries. The Pergamon frieze was constructed to be seen from a distance and to tell the story of personal battles in the strongest possible language—and this it does in sculpture that writhes and bleeds and cries aloud. It is a violently emotional form of sculpture—admired in the Renaissance by Michelangelo but not imitated—with realistic touches rendered with surpassing technical skill. For example, some of the giants have hairy armpits and the boots of Artemis are more decorative than those worn at rodeos by the cow-maidens of Texas. In contrast to the ideal statues of the classical period which in the course of time were imitated in the form of cold and pallid tombstones by academicians, the Hellenistic carvings at Pergamon marked the

beginning of violence and naturalism in sculpture, and all the hideous tortures of the baroque period in Italy, France and Spain.

Everybody is familiar with the famous *Laocoön*, now in the Vatican, the work of three sculptors of the school of Rhodes, the center of colossal images. The figures were cut from six blocks of marble cunningly joined together to allow for a representation of more than ordinary dimensions. The central figure, *Laocoön*, was a Trojan priest who counseled his warriors to beware of the tricks of the enemy when the wooden horse was propelled to the gates of Troy. "I fear the Greeks when they are bearing gifts," he said, and Athena, in a burst of vengeance, for she was on the side of the Greeks, dispatched two serpents to kill him. In the group now at the Vatican, sculptors depicted the father and his two sons in their death convulsions as they are held by the messengers of destruction. Certain objections have been leveled at the *Laocoön*: the odd anatomy of the priest's ribs; a triple-jointed thumb on the hand of one of the sons, and the strange species of snakes which are neither constrictors nor poison dispensers. Despite these strictures, the group has not lost its high position among monumental expressions of pain and exaggerated emotional strain.

I cannot today regard the *Apollon Belvedere* of the Vatican with the unmixed reverence of my

youth, but, on the other hand, having examined most of the great sculptures of the world, I cannot dismiss it with the nose-thumbing gestures of modernist gadget-makers. The statue was adored by Lord Byron and by the lordly Goethe who had considerable insight into the classic spirit; and it will have to endure as a phenomenal though belated interpretation of the slightly menacing classical deity, until someone discovers, or creates, a more convincing job. It should be explained that the figure is a marble copy after a bronze work of extraordinary technical skill executed shortly after the death of Alexander when the trend of sculpture was towards moods and physical excitement.

It should be emphasized again that in the Hellenistic period, the arts created and developed by the Greeks—the temples, statues, and minor objects—were carried far and wide by the conquests of Alexander; the civilized world from Italy to India was invigorated by the culture which came to fruition in Athens. Thus the world was prepared for new rulers, the imperialists of Italy. The art of the Romans, in almost all of its manifestations, had its roots in the achievements of the Greeks.

II. PAINTING

On the subject of Greek painting—not the decoration of vases, but murals and small, detached pictures—I cannot bring myself to inordinate enthusiasm. In the first place, I was raised on Greek literature and sculpture, and one's conditioning agents are never forgotten; and second, I have never seen any paintings of the Periclean age, for the simple reason that none has survived. In my adolescence, I ran across allusions to the great paintings of the classic period, but no evidence was adduced to corroborate them. In my unimpeachable tutelage, I caught cryptic references to the frescoes resisting the eruption of Mt. Vesuvius. I was given to understand that the wall decorations of Pompeii and Herculaneum were of unmentionable obscenity and years of growth and scholarship have not materially altered that warning.

Still, I would not swear that the paintings of classical Greece were not of the first rank. We

have the word of the old Athenians—and what a critical, reputation-shattering clique they were!—that painting, as practiced by the masters, was on the same plane as the greatest sculpture. And we know that the picture of *Aphrodite* by Apelles was admired in the same terms as those chosen to praise the *Aphrodite* of Praxiteles. The courtesan Phryne, proclaimed the most beautiful woman in the world by artists and intellectuals, posed for both conceptions, if we can believe the chroniclers. The Greeks, as we all know, were satisfied with nothing short of perfection, and we have proof that in sculpture they arrived at their goal. We have verbal testimony to the perfection of their painting—if not the pictures themselves.

Since the great painters are now no more than names, we may as well record their names and have done with the matter: Polygnotus, Zeuxis, Parrhasius, Apollodorus, and Apelles—artists who lived in song and story in default of their performances. Polygnotus adorned the walls of public buildings, and the *Stoa* of Athens (the outdoor portico where hemlock-drinkers discussed the vanity of human effort), with large-scale representations of the *Sack of Troy*, *Odysseus in Hades* and *The Rape of the Leucippidae*, in which the women involved were no more than transparently draped. Centuries later, Rubens treated the same subject in one of his best paint-

ings—and the raped women were nude—as they undoubtedly were in the historical episode.

Zeuxis was a showy fellow who amassed a fortune from his paintings but who never exhibited anything unworthy of his talents. His rival—Parrhasius—was another show-off, and the two of them were good-natured rivals in developing the art of realism. Parrhasius, so the story goes, depicted an Olympic runner with such verisimilitude that the spectators saw the sweat streaming from his painted pores. And Zeuxis, not to be eclipsed, painted a bunch of grapes so true to nature that a pair of swallows darted into the roofless exhibition room and tried to eat the fruit. The same artist contracted to paint *Helen of Troy*, with the stipulation that the five most beautiful women of Greece should pose for him in the nude, thus affording him the opportunity of selecting and combining their charms. Apelles evidently enjoyed a fame comparable to that of the masters of sculpture, having won the hearts of the Greeks by his *Aphrodite Rising from the Sea*. The tales of his genius are many and improbable, but the most scrupulous historians agree that he was the favorite portrait painter of Alexander the Great, and that the youthful conquerer sent him his favorite concubine as a token of appreciation.

Painting in Greece reached its highest point in the fourth and third centuries B.C., and the

character of the wall decorations of this period has been transmitted to us by the Roman copies in mosaic and fresco. Most of the Roman copies leave me cold, but the mosaic at Naples of the *Battle of Issus*, a scene portraying the rout of Darius by Alexander, a copy of a fourth century B.C. fresco, is a picture of the first magnitude—and a large-scale hint of the advanced brush work of the classic days. I should also mention the best surviving fresco, a panorama known as *The Adobrandini Wedding*, and fulsomely admired by the French painters of the academic age. This wedding scene is a semi-religious, pre-nuptial foregathering, with the customary hocus-pocus of the prearranged mysteries and the attempt to make the mating something higher than the physical. The painting was executed about the time of the birth of Christ, and it has captivated Frenchmen like Poussin, and modernists like Picasso, because of its statuesque figures and its severe, geometrical style.

It is difficult to ascertain the aim of the Greeks in their painting. In sculpture they created ideal forms and the perfection of physical structure—and they were never concerned with naturalistic effects before the Pergamon age. Hence, it seems more than likely that the stories of the swallows mistaking painted grapes for real clusters of fruit, or runners giving the malodorous and visual impression of actually secreting sebaceous ooze,

are the exaggerated encomiums of truthful reporters who were confronted for the first time with pictorial devices which today are commonplace, and not highly esteemed. The world of the sculptor is confined to the statue itself and the surrounding atmosphere only enhances the boundaries of solid marble. But when the Greeks suddenly discovered the world of illusion—backgrounds extending into deep space, and distant objects delineated with deceptive skill—they were naturally excited, and extravagant in their appraisal of the painters. But it can be truthfully said that while Greek sculpture remains unsurpassed through the ages, the efforts of their painters, from every shred of evidence we have, were surpassed by western European artists of importance, from Leonardo, Michelangelo and Tintoretto, to Rembrandt, Rubens, Goya, Delacroix and others too numerous to mention. In the solution of technical problems the Greeks antedated the Italians by many centuries, as is shown in the realistic devices of *The Woman Playing the Lyre*, in the Metropolitan Museum in New York, a wall painting of the first century B.C. Nothing in the work of Giotto, in the thirteenth century, can equal this work in three-dimensional knowledge; but spiritually, the painting is pretty empty and unimportant.

12. MASTER POTTERS

Let us turn from conjectures and hearsay to a department of pictorial art in which the Greeks have never been equaled—that of ceramics and vase-painting. To guide us in this field we have thousands and tens of thousands of examples—and most in a perfect state of preservation.

From the day that the first artist of the troglodytes, working in his subway studio, smeared lampblack and grease on his drinking bowl, to outline a quadruped resembling a bison, man has excelled in shaping and decorating pottery. Long before the Christian era, the Chinese were renowned for glazed wares of exquisite craftsmanship, and their period vases are the treasures of wealthy collectors. The aborigines of Mexico and Peru fashioned and ornamented kitchen utensils in designs far from classical, and today the modernist connoisseur who possesses an ancient Peruvian pot is the object of cultivated envy. And our own aborigines, the Indians, worked in clay to

create a style of pottery unique in the history of the subject.

But the master potters of the world were the Greeks. In variety, design, productivity, and the adaptation of beautifully made objects to everyday use, they have left their rivals so far in the ruck as to make comparisons superfluous. Indeed, they have left us so many thousands of examples of their highest skill, and unavoidably, so many more thousand examples of their second-rate, assembly line, output, as to prejudice us against their supreme attainments. It would have been better for the prestige of the potters if they had not been so productive, and if the colonial Greeks, in Italy and elsewhere, had not corrupted the classic models into purely commercial knickknacks. The Athenians, in their prime, as I have said, were artists, not money grubbers; but their originality was exploited and commercialized by emigrants who founded potteries in the colonies and debased the best of Greek ceramics into stereotyped patterns.

The tradition of Greek pottery had its historical origin in the palaces of Crete and Mycenae as early as 2500 B.C. During this luxury-loving age, a school of superb geometrical vase-making was followed by free, or anti-symmetrical, pottery, the motifs of which were largely biological—plants, jellyfish, octopi, and other small fauna. In the

ninth and eighth centuries B.C., there was a return to geometrical design, in some respects memorable, but for the most part monotonous and unimaginative. The basements of museums have innumerable exhibits of this period in the glass cases behind the mummies and the plaster casts. The resurgent geometrical style was applied to large urns and vases of every shape and capacity. Generally speaking, it was a scheme of ornamentation in which single, or concentric circles predominated, the circles broken, or crossed by tangential lines, and interlacings, to divert the eye from round-and-round tracings. Between the circular bands, on the larger vases, were crude pictures of naval engagements and funeral processions—events noticed ceremonially at the double gate of Athens, the Dipylon gate, which gave its name to the style. The color scheme of the ninth and eighth century vases consisted of reddish-brown figures, accentuated by white or black touches, against a ground of pale yellow or buff tones.

For a full century, from 600 to 500 B.C., the potters labored in the black-figure style—that is, with dark linear figures set against an earthen-red ground. The figures were drawn in the archaic tradition; but decoratively as pattern-components placed on the belly of an urn, they put modern ceramists to shame. The black-figure

style is affected in these unholy times by fanciers who prefer the formative to the finished, and it is indeed, in design and proportioning, a beautiful form of ceramics. The word ceramics, incidentally, comes from the name of a locality near Athens where potters' clay was obtained—but it is hardly in the same class as the red-figure ware. Before looking at the classic style, it will be useful to review the geometrical shapes first employed by the Greeks.

For storing or carrying wine and other liquids, the *amphora*, a vase with a narrow neck and handles on each side below the neck, was in common use. The water jar was the *hydria*, a vessel equipped with three handles and broader at the shoulder than the *amphora*. The *crater*, broad-rimmed with short cylindrical supports, was the mixing bowl and a favorite vase in Renaissance Florence. Varieties of the *crater*, such as the cup and the bell, were popular and in constant demand.

Black-figure vase-painting was followed, about 500 B.C., by a different method which simply reversed the traditional procedure. The reversed technique was the far-flung red-figure style, in which the ground was covered with lustrous black pigment and the figures composed in red, in the natural terra-cotta tones of the clay, or brightened by some warm earth tones. The red-

figure style was enormously fecund, and vase-painters enjoyed a fame second only to that of sculptors. Boldly they signed their works, and today you may see inscriptions in capital letters on many of the objects. I wondered about those inscriptions until I was proficient enough to translate them, and more often than not, they were shameless bouquets from the master potter to an apprentice chosen because of his physical comeliness. They read as a rule something like this: *Young Skouras Is a Handsome Lad*; or *That Boy Aristophanes Is the Playmate of Zeus*; or *Erysipelas is the Apple of My Eye*.

The Greeks made pottery for utilitarian purposes, but as in all their works of art, they would tolerate nothing this side of perfection; and even in the mass production period at Athens, after the Peloponnesian War, and in the colonies, they never duplicated a design or stole a motif. The problems occupying them in their pottery and their domestic implements were identical, though on a more modest scale, with those of temple-building and carving—infinite simplicity, free but perfect proportioning, functionalism, or the adaptation of shape and form to intended purpose—and above all others, a beautiful sense of fitness which was never corrupted by melodramatic tricks or sensationalism.

The wares of the Greek ceramists were part

and parcel of the routine life of the people. Vases were designed to hold flowers and fruits, or as decanters for wine, or as storage jars. Beautiful cups were fashioned for drinking purposes and all sorts of table china were decorated with religious scenes. The ceremonials in the temples and at *al fresco* altars necessitated a great variety of sacred vessels; the holy olive oil given as a prize in the Panathenaic games required a container of impeccable artistry, as did those of other festivities such as a special form of *amphora*, with a long neck, which held the water for the bridal bath—and was also used as a monument for those who died unmarried. The exquisitely shaped *lecythus*, a bell-mouthed, narrow-necked, single-handed vase, was filled with fragrant oils and buried with the dead or left at the grave side.

To a large extent, the vases and pottery in use today are derived from Greek models, whether they come from the celebrated designers of Sweden and France, or from the factories owned by the dime stores. With the classic Athenians, ceramic art in its decorative aspects was purely decorative in most cases, but with the masters, it was also a medium for the delineation, on a small scale, of the mural paintings of the great decorators. In fact, the murals of the *Stoa*, by Polygnotus, are known solely from the small-scale adaptations on vases and urns.

The Greeks, as a matter of course, ornamented their vases and household implements with subject matter of a religious nature—or with scenes from decisive battles in which the issue turned on the will of the gods. Today the subjects chosen by ceramic decorations are largely eclectic. The mythological scenes are returning, and historical events as well, but it would probably be regarded as sacrilege if vessels in daily use were decorated with subjects taken from the Christian religion.

I do not wish to imply that all the religious motifs employed by the old potters were executed in a spirit of reverence. The religion of the Greeks was open to all manner of excitements from profound worship to pure sensuality, and on many of the choicest examples of vase-making, you may see fiercely amorous satyrs approaching reclining maidens in attitudes which would never pass a modern censor. The most prevalent subjects are variations on the power and personal habits of the gods, or on the Homeric and Persian wars. In hundreds and hundreds of vases you will see the Amazons holding their own against undersize *hoplites*; Heracles dining with Athena, or diverting himself with female warriors, the gods feasting, relaxing, or plotting trouble on earth, revelers headed by Dionysus, satyrs pursuing maenads, and young athletes in training or in competition.

There is a vast amount of overrated pottery in the world, Chinese, French and American—and Greek, too, after the decline of Athens. It would seem that artists of all nations, after they lose their religion, or become uneasy in their patriotism, or sell their souls for money, find it simpler to make pretentious trumpery or imitations of established masterpieces, than to pursue their craft with whole-hearted integrity. The Greeks, proceeding from black figures to red, and from archaic postures and draftsmanship, to the free and cultivated and precise style of the fourth century B.C., created the most beautiful linear designs ever drawn upon pottery. Their drawings at the peak of the classic period, both on a black ground, and in rarer examples now more valuable than any other ceramics, on a white ground, have been admired and adapted by western artists from Mantegna to Ingres, Rodin, Beardsley and Picasso.

In the mature, classic vase-painting, the old artists did not attempt to produce realistic effects, or the modern technical devices of three-dimensional figures, seen in perspective. They were linear artists working on clay and they knew all the secrets of linear decoration. When John Keats, writing in the first quarter of the nineteenth century, gazed at a Grecian urn, he was not primarily concerned with the red figures on a black ground, nor with the quality of the line drawings,

nor yet with the difficulties attending a decorative scheme on a rounded surface. He was moved and inspired by the Greek feeling for the freshness of the world, and the calm, sacrificial joys of an artistic people. Thus he wrote, when observing the pictures on the urn.

*Who are these coming to the sacrifice?
To what green altar, O mysterious priest,
Lead'st thou that heifer lowing at the skies,
And all her silken flanks with garlands drest?
What little town by river or sea shore,
Or mountain-built with peaceful citadel,
Is emptied of its folk, this pious morn?
And, little town, thy streets for evermore
Will silent be; and not a soul to tell
Why thou art desolate, can e'er return.*

13. MINOR IN NAME ONLY

Most Americans, upright in daily living and patriotic to the core, are so mercilessly assailed by the encroachments of the atomic age as to have little time for art—large-scale art in the customary forms of sculpture and painting, and the art born in the kitchen, the boudoir, and the counting house. Our chinaware, our stoves of stainless steel, our aluminum pots and pans, the fancy coverings and nylon integuments invented to bedeck the distaffs, the metal coinage of the land, the helmets worn by G.I.'s, the jewels flaunted by women at the top and bottom of the social ladder—all these are manufactured commodities into which the refinements of art seldom penetrate. Many are functional appliances, but sheer utility is not necessarily a property of art. The rattrap is a functional job, and likewise the silo, but art is created only when the imagination works upon the raw material—when objects of practical import are refined and adorned without damage to their specific purpose. To the average American, bent on making a decent living, the

idea of art is almost an illusion—a luxury for a few souls exempt by good fortune from commerce, or an obsolete pastime made illustrious by the Greeks.

When the modern wealthy host seats his guests at table, the dinner service, in china and silver alike, is all imported—antique ware supplied by dealers at a handsome profit. But the humbler American wage-earner, from Cape Cod to Sausalito, is not very critical of the artistic virtues of the dinner service. If the food is abundant, the table fresh and clean, and the drinks on tap, he takes no thought of abstract values. Our ancient heroes the Greeks, however, never overlooked the element of beauty. Whether they dined in state with philosophers and political leaders, or in the patio of a private house, they took care that their china, their silver, and their saucepans were more graceful in design than anything used by outsiders. I do not wish to imply that they sat around gabbling about art in the esoteric lingo of useless esthetes; but they were conscious of the potentialities of the imagination, and never for an instant doubted their capacity to reduce barbarian rivals to the level of neatherds.

I do not pretend to know why the Greeks took so great an interest in art; why they loved the shapes of objects and the forms of statues; why they put art above commerce and refused to sell themselves to money grubbing. The Western

world is full of objects of art: French period, or provincial, furniture; antiques from England and Spain and everywhere, china and silver from East and West, and much of it is costly and remarkable. But in the supreme achievements of solid art, the inflexible standards of cultivated simplicity, perfection of design, and the adaptation of form to purpose, without extraneous fripperies or barren practicality, the Greeks are still at the head of the procession. Let us examine a few of their accomplishments in the utilitarian demesne.

Bronze, an alloy of copper and tin, was known to the ancients from prehistoric times, and in the working of this compound, as well as gold and silver, the Greeks had no close competitors. Their sculptures in bronze have already been discussed, but their prowess in the minor arts, to use an inaccurate classification, cannot be overlooked. The temples and palaces of Crete and Mycenae were resplendent with metal objects, bronze, gold and silver; masks, cups, daggers, breast-plates and head ornaments, all executed with truly marvelous craft. The twin cups of gold from Vaphio, an old town near Sparta, with their *repoussé* decorations of cowpokes trying to corral wild cattle, have an astonishing liveliness and charm which the goldsmiths of our machine age cannot even imitate.

After the fall of Crete and Mycenae, the use of bronze declined, to be revived in the sixth

century B.C. on an elaborate scale. In the full tide of monumental sculpture, the celators and die-casters were not to be outclassed, and metal work was almost as popular as monumental art. Every bronze appliance was graced with style and distinction: mirrors polished on one side to serve as reflectors, and engraved on the other to beguile the tired eye, were staples in the markets, in company with a long list of common articles, such as lamps, vases, drinking goblets, and candlesticks, all decorated with free designs of animal figures.

The fabrication of arms and armor was an industry in itself. Not utility alone but shapeliness went into the spears and swords; the breastplates were molded to fit the form of the soldier, and headpieces of many kinds were fashioned with matchless skill. Two thousand years ago, the Athenian artisans contrived a bronze helmet that was imitated by the Germans in World War II, and later by the Americans, a deep, brimless, close-fitting head-covering in contrast to the tin pancake worn by our doughboys in the first World War. That helmet is a work of art, distinguished by the skill in design and purpose common to other objects—cauldrons, toilet articles, grills, and so on. Compared with the finest examples of Greek metal work, the goldsmith's art as practiced by Benvenuto Cellini, its bewildering craftsmanship notwithstanding, has a

factitious skill and effusiveness now known as the Hollywood touch.

An infallible sense of fitness, of proportioning, of the ultimate and only way to use materials to be transformed into objects of art, is attested to by Greek jewelry. As far back as 2000 years ago, Athenian craftsmen, politically labeled slaves but imaginatively as free as mountain air, entered the service of the barbarian tycoons of Cyprus to execute necklaces, bracelets, earrings, and diadems for the dyed hair of colonial princesses. The jewelry of those craftsmen, and others in scattered localities, has a quality that remains an enigma to all subsequent workmen, and in my estimation, it is still the most artistic jewelry ever wrought by the hand of man.

The jewelry is neither elaborately contrived nor opulently designed to display the richness of metal and the effulgence of precious stones—the tricks of the trade, from the Graeco-Roman shops down to the jewelers on upper Fifth Avenue—nor to accentuate costliness and advertise the commercial value of the articles. Greek jewelry is the last word in elegance and craft—not made to dazzle the eye, but with inexpressible delicacy in weaving gold threads into neckbands and attaching filigree ornaments in the shape of hanging beads or globules. Surfaces were decorated with natural forms of plants and animals, or tiny mythological figures such as winged victories and

cupids; and the pendant attachments to earrings and bracelets were relieved by minute heads of lions and rams, exquisitely modeled but without the Cellini, or Hollywood, artiness. These priceless examples of Greek art have been largely preserved in tombs, and along with gems and coins, are virtually the only productions of pure Greek genius that have come down to us as they were originally made.

To appreciate the scope, craft, and beauty of the art of the gem-cutter and die-sinker for coins, you should go to the museums. The Metropolitan Museum in New York has a magnificent display with photographic enlargements to bring out every line and detail, and most museums contain excellent collections since Greek coins were issued in abundance, and gems were used as seals, and were almost as highly favored by Athenians as jewelry. The Greeks were not smitten by precious stones and never bothered to collect them or mount them. Diamonds, rubies and emeralds they dismissed as gaudy and vulgar gewgaws for Orientals, and no woman—housewife or courtesan—would have looked upon a diamond bracelet as a work of art. The Greeks did not confuse art values with scarcity values—and they were right.

The gems selected by the ancient craftsmen were hard, semiprecious stones—agate, rock-crystal, amethyst, and chalcedony, which were

cut in intaglio; that is, incised to form a die from which an impression was struck in wax to serve as a private seal. It is an unfortunate misnomer to call the cutting of gems and coins, as perfected by the Greeks, a minor art. Using only a few tools, a drill operated by a wheel, and a diamond point, the great craftsmen of the fifth and fourth centuries B.C. designed in small bits of hard stone figures as clean and fine and beautiful as those created by the lords of sculpture—such forms as the *Athena Parthenos* in miniature, a flying swan with the texture of the feathers revealed in microscopic scratches, maidens at the well, or playing the lyre, or disrobing. Later on, in Hellenistic and Graeco-Roman times, the purity and dignity of the designs were sacrificed to more fussy conceptions and technical showiness. In their best period, the gem-cutters were almost as famous as the sculptors, and leaders like Dexamenos were honored in the same language and with the same monetary recognition accorded large-scale carvers. The classic Greeks did not cut stones in which the figures stood out in relief, as in the cameo, but in the Hellenistic age and in Roman times, the cutting of cameos was developed to a pitch of technical ingenuity that defies modern practice.

Coins, as we hoard and spend them today, are minted in the millions by means of a die, an incised piece of metal with the principal or

obverse design on one side, and the reverse engraving on the other. A disc, say a silver disc the size of a dollar, is inserted into the die-clasp, and the two designs simultaneously impressed into it. The disc is prevented by a collar from spreading under pressure, and the edge is milled to allow for the stacking of the finished coins.

In ancient Greece, the process of coin-making was the same in principle but exclusively a work of the hand. The die was of hard metal but with only one engraving, the obverse. When it was fixed in the block of an anvil, the coin was placed against it and struck with a hammer. The metal was not collared and the coin spread a little under the impact of the hammer—and no two coins were identical. The design came out much higher in relief than the figures on modern pieces of money, and the coins could not be piled. The Greeks could have corrected deviations from symmetry, had they cared to, but they had no use for the stereotyped uniformity and deadness of machined hard money.

We shall never again behold anything like the coins of the Greeks, or anything remotely like them unless we destroy our mechanical civilization and begin anew on a simpler, more intrinsically artistic foundation. There was no single monetary system in Grecian territory. Every important city on the mainland and in the colonies, eager to demonstrate its artistic skill—and its in-

dependence—devised an individual coinage; and in some of the colonies, notably Sicily and the cities in southern Italy, the most amazing pieces of money in the whole history of numismatics were struck. The finest coins, at home and away, are works of art of a high order, with designs as carefully executed as the friezes of the Parthenon. The designs, more often than not, are of religious import; the head of a goddess in a ring of dolphins, the chariot of victory, Zeus on his throne, Athena Parthenos, a nymph pouring a libation on the altar, or, in secular vein, lions, rams, horses and grains.

For homes, as they are exploited by modern interior decorators and antiquarians, the Greeks would have had nothing but contempt. With respect to the antiquarians they were incontestably correct. But in the matter of home-making in the American sense; that is, the building of a man's castle for the upbringing of his children, the authority of his wife in domestic questions, and a meeting place for his friends, the Greeks were not so right. In fact, they were as barbarous as their enemies. All they required in a home was a bed for a night's lodging, a dining room—and a private prison for the women with their slaves, dogs and cats, and a nursery for the fattening of young artists and *hoplites*. The males, fathers and grown-up sons, lived in the streets, or the gymnasium, or loitered in the shady colonnades chat-

tering about the flight of the soul or the upstart antics of the Spartans, and by the consent of custom, consorted with the ladies of the brothels and took them out to dinner.

The sparse pieces of furniture in the houses—chairs, tables, couches, sideboards and chests—were put together with the simplicity and appropriateness common to every branch of Greek art, and the only splendor evidenced was in the thrones of the gods, the carven seats for the big-wigs at the Olympic games and the performances of the tragedies, and the paraphernalia of the sacrifice. The walls of the houses were bare. Vases lined the mantelpieces; the kitchenware was as exceptionally wrought as the coins and statues; and here and there were those delightful modelings in terra cotta, the Tanagra figures, named after a town in Boeotia. In the Tanagra figures, the Greeks, for once, let down their filleted hair and produced informal statuettes of women gossiping, children at play with little chariots, dogs and dolls, women walking in the rain, and exhibiting their vanity in many ways. It was characteristic of the Greeks, in their informal sculpture, to make the women pay for the relaxation of effort; there are few males in the terra cotta gallery.

In concluding this summary of the so-called minor arts, I must say, for the benefit of the women, that the Greeks knew how to make

dresses for their chattels and mistresses. The simplest form of covering for women was the *chiton*, of wool, an oblong strip of cloth about ten feet long and six feet wide, with a hole in the middle. The garment was doubled, pulled over the head, and girdled, and it was good to see; plain or voluptuous according to the underlying structure of the wearer.

The Greeks also bequeathed us the most beautiful apparel ever devised for protecting and adorning the female figure, and always were at pains not to transcend the bounds of modesty. With consummate artistry, they created a chaste and inexpensive garment that could be worn to the fullest advantage by women of all shapes and sizes. The garment was the *peplum*—revived from age to age with commercial alterations—a kind of tunic draped across the bust, girdled at the waistline, and rippling to the feet in natural flutings. Usually of wool, and held together at strategic points by metal clasps, it was capable of many variations and lengths, from the rough swathings worn by domestic *helots* to the intricate folds affected by the kept ladies. For their mythical Amazon warriors, and for the cool goddess of the chase, the Greek sculptors provided the loveliest of all garments designed to enhance the beauty of woman—the brief, uncinctured tunic occasionally seen today, with some modification and over a pair of trunks, on young figure skaters.

14. GOOD-BYE GREEKS

In our twentieth-century civilization, the lot of the carver is hard, and such curious souls as venture into clay and stone deserve a hand for their fortitude, if not for their performances. The situation is a cause for tears, but not wholly unfathomable. The easiest analysis would be to blame it on the times which oppose contemplation, and on the public which, in its indifference, has allowed art to pass into the control of coteries and specialists. But to blame the absence of sculpture on the character of the age is cogent only to a certain extent. The art impulse is by no means moribund in America, and year after year, myriads of boys and girls in every corner of the nation draw and model and paint as if by instinct. But they are soon frustrated or discouraged, and all but a handful drift into commerce and forget their early enthusiasm. I might attribute the present situation to the ancient Greeks, since the dead are an easy target, and maintain

that the art of sculpture was long ago exhausted; but the extant statues of the Parthenon would rise up to strike me dumb—the little horses, the reclining figures rendered headless by time, the *Aphrodites*, the *Apollos*, and the *Winged Victory*. These works are living organisms, radiant with beauty and the genius of master artists, and when statues are alive and inspiring to behold, one cannot say that the art of sculpture is dead, or that the Greeks exhausted it. To speculate on the forces of life which exalt art in one age, warfare in another, and astrophysics in our own, is a hazardous gamble, but the art of sculpture in Greece was so pre-eminent and fertile, in comparison with the barren statues in our own day, that one or two deductions are worth the risk.

To re-point the moral of this book, the Greeks demanded sculpture as an alcoholic his liquor, or an athlete his sports. Hence, in the training of young artists, the public eye was upon them, and by word of mouth it was gossiped in Athens that certain neophytes were worth watching, and that Phidias and his men were doing a stupendous job at the new temple. When any art is part and parcel of the daily occupations of the people, and representative of their highest ideals, the two-by-four pretenders are automatically ruled out of court by public decree—and the Athenians were ruthless critics. In Greece, sculpture was never an isolated art, an irrelevant commodity predestined

for museums, galleries, or an occasional connoisseur. It was primarily the accompaniment of architecture, and when detached, an indispensable factor in municipal planning; and from beginning to end, it embodied collective beliefs and stood as a symbol of local pride and general patriotism.

Modern sculpture is the art of the dilettante and the starveling. Our new architecture, with its sheer, unpunctured walls, makes no provision for sculptured ornament; and in the entire nation, is there a city or town that commissions carvings to embellish public works? Destitute of public confidence and legitimate connections, the great art of carving is practically impotent, numbering among its practitioners a few persons of talent who achieve a little notice and small material rewards at the cost of a lifetime of toil; a clique of sensationalists who mutilate classic figures by elongating them, inverting the breasts, or lopping off the heads; and a sprinkling of contraption-makers who ask us to discover the secrets of creation in tangles of haywire or imitations of the wreckage culled from an automobile cemetery. A few capable workmen make a living by modeling portrait busts; once in a while, someone finances a man on horseback for a public square; and lady modelers copy antique dolphins and cupids and mermaids for the swimming pools of movie actors.

A few years ago, the death of our foremost

sculptor, George Grey Barnard, was not the occasion of much publicity. This man, though a student of the classic Greeks and Michelangelo, was profoundly influenced by the struggles of American democracy. In his twenty-second year, in Paris, he carved without assistants a gigantic work called *I Feel Two Natures Struggling Within Me*, two marble figures, one sprawled on the ground, the other erect and ready for the challenge of life—the conflict between the bestial and the spiritual. “When I saw the boulevard statues of *Victory* in Paris,” Barnard explained, “I began to wonder. ‘What victory,’ I asked myself, and I decided to create a symbol of the two forces planted in every man.” The symbol is one of the great carvings of the modern world, and in his last years, the sculptor told me a story about it.

“I was in the basement of a western museum,” Barnard said, “looking things over, when I suddenly encountered in the hallway a plaster cast of the *Two Natures*, and in front of it a boy of about eighteen trying to make a drawing of it. I paused a moment and then asked the youth who had carved the big figures, and without troubling to look up, he replied, ‘Oh, I don’t know. One of those old Greeks, I guess.’ I was heartsick,” the sculptor said, “for I had hoped to make my profession a living art, as the Greeks once had made it—something as democratic as the literary art of Walt Whitman and Mark Twain—and all I had

achieved was a museum piece—something buried in a basement, and attributed to an antique artist."

The story needs little comment. The Greeks loved sculpture; the Americans apparently have no use for it. Not even in California, where athletes of both sexes grow tall and tanned and handsome in the perpetual sunshine, has sculpture been cultivated. The Greeks devoted most of their resources and their greatest genius to graven images and counted no building complete until it had been properly embellished with carvings.

A final word before taking leave of them. They remain the only people who put art above all other pursuits—particularly above politics. They demanded that the artist be patriotic, and took pride in showing the world what it meant to be an Athenian. They were not ashamed of the state; they worked for the state and spurned the concept of international art because it robbed them of individuality. But the Greek leaders—and mark this well—in sharp contrast to totalitarian despots, did not ask their artists to celebrate the state except by the quality of their attainments. They never used art as propaganda, nor did they compel the artist to glorify any political idea. The Greeks did not esteem any political ideology, or the founders of it, as worthy of the imagination of the artist. The only subjects worthy of the artists were religious beliefs—the gods they wor-

shipped, and the highest thoughts of man. When the renowned Phidias introduced a profane note, a little portrait of himself, into the shield of the *Athena Parthenos*, he was thrown into jail for impiety.

Furthermore, the artist was an absolutely free agent. He was delegated to represent the gods, and in many cases, was a slave economically, but his spirit and his imagination were never enslaved. In the prosecution of his special function, he was his own master. And the best of Greek art is exalted and pure and clean, never tainted by the indecent, the coarse, the cheap, or the mercenary, never stooping to the sensational, the unintelligible, and the hypocritical. We can never say good-bye to the Greeks as artists.

GLOSSARY

ABACUS. Slab forming top of the capital of the column.

AMPHORA. Two-handled jug used for general storage purposes.

ARCHITRAVE. The lintel above the columns; the lowest division of the entablature.

CAPITAL. Topmost division of the column—usually decorated.

CARYATID. Sculptured female figure used in architecture as a column to support the entablature.

CELLA. Enclosed chamber of the temple and seat of the cult statue.

CERAMICS. Another name for the art of pottery.

CHITON. Greek tunic and basic garment of men and women alike.

COLONNADE. Series of columns usually supporting the entablature and enclosing the temple.

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COLUMN. Upright member used to support the roof. Composed of base, shaft and capital.

CORNICE. Crowning or projecting part of the entablature.

CRATER. Beverage bowl.

CYLIX. Drinking cup.

DRUM. One of the cylindrical segments, or divisions, of the column.

ECHINUS. Cushion of the capital at the top of the column.

ENTABLATURE. Part of the temple above the columns and forming the support of the pediment and roof. Composed of frieze, architrave and cornice.

ENTASIS. Slight swelling of the column in the middle divisions.

FRESCO. Form of mural decoration applied to wet plaster.

FRIEZE. Middle division of the entablature, usually sculptured. In form, a narrow band of marble running around the temple.

INTAGLIO. Sunken, or incised design, in gems, seals, and coins.

LINTEL. Horizontal beam.

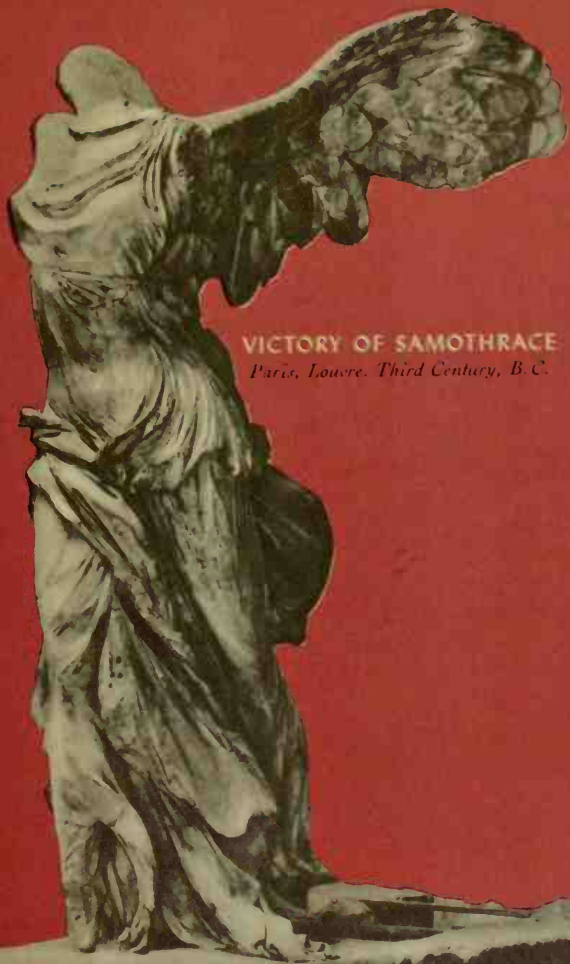
METOPÉ. Rectangular space between the triglyphs of the temple. Usually carved in relief.

GLOSSARY

- ORDER.** Division of architecture based on the character of the column, as Doric, Ionic, and Corinthian orders.
- PEDIMENT.** Triangular gable of the temple.
- PILASTER.** Square column forming part of the wall.
- PILLAR.** Supporting member of the temple—the column.
- RELIEF.** Sculptured figures projecting from a flat surface. Usually designated as low, middle, and high, or full relief, according to the degree of projection.
- REPOUSSÉ.** Relief, or raised decorations, on metal.
- SHAFT.** Upright, or central part of the column between base and capital.
- STELE.** Commemorative gravestone or slab.
- STYLOBATE.** Base, or floor, upon which two or more columns stand.
- TRIGLYPH.** Ornamental square furrowed with three vertical channels and separating the metopes of the temple. Originally a device to conceal the ends of beams.
- VOLUTE.** Spiral ornament. Usually refers to the Ionic capital.

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